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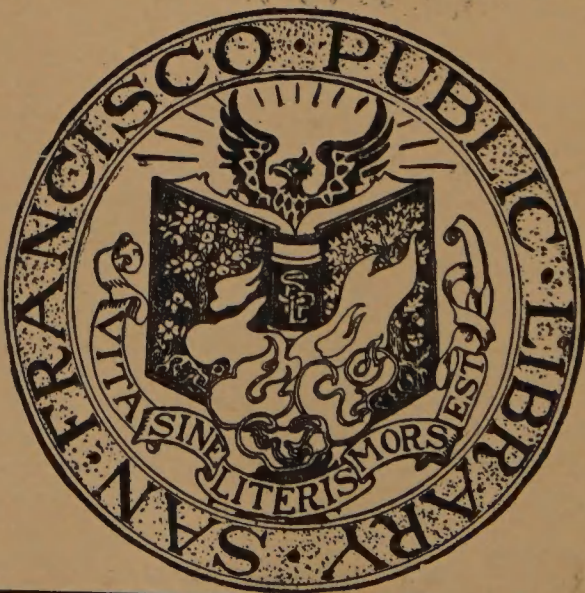
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# HENRY OF GUISE

## AND OTHER PORTRAITS

BY

H. C. MACDOWALL

‘ Je l’ay faict le plus près de la verité que j’ay peu ’

PHILIPPE DE COMINES

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## HENRY OF GUISE

### I

DUKE RENÉ II. of Lorraine, who died in 1508, had been haunted all his life by the vision of a crown. He was the grandson of René of Anjou,<sup>1</sup> titular King of Naples and Sicily, whose marriage with Isabel, the heiress of Lorraine, had united the duchy to Anjou and Provence for half a century ; and although, after King René's death in 1480, the French provinces reverted to the French crown, the Duchess Isabel's marriage had none the less dowered the Lorraine princes who succeeded her with a great inheritance,—the vast, shadowy claims of the old counts of Anjou, who had in their time pretended to half a dozen thrones. From the sceptred tombs of his Angevin ancestors rose the phantom which troubled Duke René from the hour when his career opened gloriously with the defeat of Charles the Bold under the walls of Nancy, until its uneventful close ; and although it eluded him to the end, he was careful to hand on to his children those unfulfilled aspirations in token of which he quartered with his own silver

<sup>1</sup> Father of our English queen, Margaret of Anjou.

eaglets, the crimson pales of Aragon, the crimson bars of Hungary, the lilies of Anjou and Sicily, and the double cross of Jerusalem. His eldest son Anthony succeeded him in the duchies of Lorraine and Bar; to Claude, his second son, he bequeathed his estates in Normandy and Picardy, with the title of Count of Guise.<sup>1</sup>

By dint of energy and adroitness, Claude of Lorraine soon made his way at the French court. Lorraine had always preferred the French to the imperial alliance; one of her dukes had fallen at Montcassel, another at Crécy, a third had followed John the Good into captivity from the field of Poitiers, and Claude carried on the family tradition by placing his sword at the service of France. His handsome face and gallant bearing soon won him the favour of Francis I., and his foreign birth was no defect in the eyes of the monarch who had been cruelly betrayed by Charles of Bourbon, his own near kinsman. Honours and estates were lavished upon him; his county of Guise was raised (1527) to a duchy; a part of the crown domain was alienated in his favour, in spite of the protests of the Parisian Parliament, that he might be the better enabled to maintain his new rank; his marriage with a Bourbon princess<sup>2</sup> connected him distantly with the royal house; and in 1538 he married his daughter Marie to James V. of Scotland, whose first wife had been a daughter of France.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the department Aisne, not far from Vervins.

<sup>2</sup> Antoinette, daughter of the Count of Vendôme, great-aunt of Henry of Navarre.

<sup>3</sup> Madeleine, daughter of Francis I.



So rapid was his advancement that the French nobles regarded him with dislike and alarm, and presently the King himself began to observe with grave misgiving the growing pride and wealth of his clever favourite.

With the death of Francis I. (1547) the public life of the first Duke of Guise came to an end. He knew that for those who had been closely connected with the old court there could be no place in the new, and as soon as the coronation rites were over he retired to his castle of Joinville,<sup>1</sup> leaving his sons to carry on the building of the lofty structure whose foundations he had laid so well. He died in 1550, and was buried with royal honours as a king's son; the draperies of the coffin were strewn with the double cross of Jerusalem,—fit emblem, said the preacher of the funeral sermon, of the double portion of Christian zeal which for generations past had distinguished the house of Lorraine.

As Francis I. lay on his deathbed, staring mournfully into the dark future, he very earnestly entreated his son to beware of the Guises; but the Valois were doomed to be always wise too late. Claude of Guise, with the foresight of an experienced courtier, had long since ranged his six sons on the Dauphin's side, while he himself was still of the King's party, and the two eldest, Francis, Count of Aumale,<sup>2</sup> and Charles, Archbishop of Rheims, were conspicuous

<sup>1</sup> On the Marne, in Champagne.

<sup>2</sup> Francis of Guise, Gaspard de Coligny, and Catherine de' Medici were all born in the same year—1519.

among the favourites of Henry II. on his accession to the throne. The two young men had long been engaged in paving the road to fortune by paying assiduous court to Diana of Poitiers, the pale, cold woman who had cast her mysterious spells over a prince twenty years younger than herself; and the marriage of Claude, marquis of Mayenne, the third of the Guise brothers, to Diana's daughter, Louise de Brézé, was part of the price paid for her mother's goodwill. It was a scornful comment upon this unequal alliance which caused the earliest estrangement between Francis of Guise and his intimate friend Gaspard de Châtillon,<sup>1</sup> count of Coligny. "Better an inch of advantage with honour," said Coligny, "than an armful without."

Armfuls of advantage did indeed reward the condescension of the Guises. Early in the new reign they formed a league with Diana, the Constable Anne de Montmorency, and the Marshal Saint-André, which was powerful enough to plunder France with impunity and to exclude all others from a share in the spoil. "The government of provinces, the command of companies, dignities, bishoprics, abbeys, appointments,—everything went to their relatives or their allies," says a looker-on; "nothing escaped them, any more than the flies escape the

<sup>1</sup> "Ils furent tous deux en leur jeunes ans si grands compagnons . . . que j'ay ouy dire à plusieurs qui les ont vus habiller de mêmes parures, estre de même partie en tournois, mascarades . . . tous deux fort enjouez et faisans des folies plus extravagantes que tous les autres."—Brantôme, vol. iv. p. 286, ed. Lalanne.

swallows.”<sup>1</sup> In this competition, Charles of Lorraine, Claude’s second son, was remarkably successful. Archbishop of Rheims at sixteen and Cardinal of Lorraine at three-and-twenty, he held at one time two other archbishoprics — Narbonne and Lyons — and seven bishoprics, among them the wealthy sees of Metz, Toul, and Verdun ; so that there was some point in the jesting prophecy which foretold that there would soon be only one bishop in France.

The unity of the six Guises was remarkable ; animated by a single desire, the advancement of their family, “they fought for it, they manœuvred for it, like one man,” always directed by the cleverest head among them, the Cardinal of Lorraine. The young prelate was vastly admired by his contemporaries for his eloquence, for his love of letters and art, and for his fertile and ingenious intellect ; but these imposing gifts could not disguise even from partial eyes the baseness of that arrogant and cowardly spirit<sup>2</sup> to whose baleful ascendancy friends and foes alike agreed in attributing his elder brother’s gravest errors. On Francis d’Aumale, who succeeded his father as second Duke of Guise, there had been bestowed all the qualities which make men successful and some which make them great. With more than his father’s ambition, he had far more than his father’s talent ; he was more daring, more dexterous, with nobler instincts and more generous

<sup>1</sup> De Vieilleville, *Mémoires*, book ii. ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> “L’âme fort barbouillée . . . fort timide et poltron.”—Brantôme, vol. iv. p. 229, ed. Lalanne.



impulses, intended, it seemed, for better things than ever came within his field of vision. The army worshipped the great captain who saved Metz and won back Calais; the people loved him for the kindly courtesy which was extended as readily to the mean as to the great; and when he rode with his five tall brothers in the Lorraine crimson through the streets of the capital, the Parisians shouted for Guise almost as loudly as for the King.

The ambition of the family rose with the opportunity of realising it. They began to call themselves no longer Lorraine but Anjou,<sup>1</sup> and a world of ambitious design was wrapped up in the name. Henry was said to have promised, before his accession, to "restore" Provence to his friend; and in 1547, in a letter written from Rome to the King, the Cardinal of Lorraine hinted plainly at the revival of another ancient claim. There were many, he said, in Naples who asked nothing better than to be subjects of the French monarch; "and there are others who say that if you will not attempt this enterprise, you might perhaps authorise me or one of my brothers to undertake it." In the reign of Francis I. the Commandant of Auxonne refused to admit Claude of Guise into his fortress, on the ground that he was not bound to open to any one beneath the rank of a prince, and when the Duke complained of the insult, the King pronounced the soldier's conduct perfectly correct.<sup>2</sup> Under Henry II.

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé, *Hist. des ducs de Guise*, vol. i. p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 91.

Claude's son disputed precedence with princes of the blood and obtained it.

The marriage of Mary Stuart with the Dauphin Francis (1558), which was followed the next year by the death of Henry II. (July, 1559), opened new avenues of power to her kinsmen. The King was hardly dead before the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine conducted his successor from the Tournelles to the new palace of the Louvre, leaving to the Constable de Montmorency the doleful privilege of watching by the corpse ; and among the spectators of the procession were some who murmured that the 10th of July should be known in future as the Eve of the Three Kings.

There was no one to dispute with them seriously the possession of the poor sickly boy who now held in his weak fingers the sceptre of France. During the last two reigns, the cloud of the great Constable's treachery had been still resting upon the King's nearest relations, the Bourbons, and they were unfitted by character, as well as by circumstances, to take their proper place. The head of the house, Anthony of Bourbon (King of Navarre by his marriage with Jeanne d'Albret), was too vain and too inconstant to be an object of apprehension to any but his friends ; and his brother Louis, the Prince of Condé, with many attractive qualities, was wholly wanting in the cool tenacity of purpose which had carried the Lorrainers to the steps of the throne.

The sole direction of military affairs was entrusted to Francis of Guise, and the Cardinal controlled the

finances ; as the champions of orthodoxy they were sure of the Church ; through their niece, Mary Stuart, they were sure of the King. Their authority was complete, so complete that it intoxicated them, and during their seventeen months of rule they made themselves innumerable enemies. In March, 1560, an attempt was made by La Renaudie, a Huguenot gentleman of Limoges, to overthrow their government and to seize the person of the King ; it failed completely, and was punished with a ferocity bred largely of fear. For immense though their power was, it hung, as they knew, on that very slender thread, the King's life ; and on the 5th of December, 1560, the thread broke. The death of Francis II. " was commonly accounted very commodious and opportune," observes the Venetian ambassador, " for every one detested the Guises." <sup>1</sup>

The second son of Henry II., who succeeded his brother as Charles IX., was a child of ten, inaccessible to any influence but that of his mother, Catherine de' Medici, who had come to France twenty-seven years before, a bride of fourteen, with no attractions but her soft voice and her amiable temper. Francis I. had married his younger son Henry to " the banker's daughter " only to gain the friendship of her uncle, Pope Clement VII., but as Clement died a few months after the marriage it proved a bad bargain ; and when the sudden death of the Dauphin made his younger brother heir to the crown, it was still more keenly regretted. For ten years she lived childless,

<sup>1</sup> *Relations des Ambassadeurs Vénitiens*, vol. i. p. 419 (Documents sur l'histoire de France).



defenceless, and unloved, with the terror of divorce perpetually hanging over her; even after the birth of her children<sup>1</sup> the young Queen walked meekly in Diana's train; and although during the brief reign of Francis II. all outward respect had been paid to her, she had still been kept in the background; there was no room for any other woman at Mary Stuart's side. She had borne it all with amazing fortitude, resenting nothing, quarrelling with no one, accepting alike, with cheerful patience, Diana's haughty patronage and Mary's careless scorn. But now her hour had come; in the teeth of Guises, Bourbons, and Montmorencys she took up the reins of government.

The difficulties which confronted her might have dismayed the most experienced statesman; for the country was rent by religious dissension, the people oppressed and discontented, the great nobles fiercely at variance with each other, the treasury empty, the authority of the crown greatly diminished. She brought to her task a remarkable knowledge of men and things, acquired while she was still only a deeply interested spectator of the political game, faculties preternaturally quickened by the perils through which she had passed, a soul depraved by years of unworthy submission, and a thirst for power, which was perhaps her ruling passion. She was incapable of perceiving

<sup>1</sup> Her children were—Francis II., born Jan. 1543; Eliz., who married Philip II. of Spain; Claude, who married Charles, Duke of Lorraine; Charles IX., born 1550; Henry III., born 1551; Margaret, who married Henry of Navarre; Francis, Duke of Alençon, born March, 1554. Three others died young.

any but the immediate consequences of her actions ; her highest ambition—and who can blame her?—was to save from shipwreck the vessel on which all her hopes were embarked ; and in rough weather she invariably ran for the nearest port.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare the impression she made on those who viewed her only from a distance, with that made on those who knew her well ; in the pages of Protestant writers, such as D'Aubigné, she looms tall and terrible, with little of her sex about her ; the rapid changes of front inspired by sudden panic, the shifty expedients to which she constantly resorted to gain time, were magnified by distance into the bold, deliberate manœuvres of a skilful and unscrupulous politician. It was, on the contrary, the intensely feminine element in Catherine which perplexed her intimate advisers ; her love of power was always warring with her natural timidity and irresolution.<sup>2</sup> Her activity was boundless ; she was perpetually writing, talking, investigating, or entertaining ; she had an immense appetite and took a great deal of exercise, walking so fast, in spite of her extreme stoutness, that it was hard to keep up with her. She had hours of depression, when she wept anxious tears in her own room, but in public she was always placid and smiling ; and if pleasant words could have paid the

<sup>1</sup> “E per natura e per deliberazione era disposta a seguire que partiti que più erano rimote dalla potestà della fortuna, e che si potevano conseguire con manco pericolo e con manco sangue.”—Davila.

<sup>2</sup> “The Queen-mother, who is by nature fearfull.”—Walsingham to Burleigh, in Digges, *The compleat Ambassador*, p. 149. “Comme femme elle veut et ne veut pas.”—Tavannes.

King's debts no creditor would ever have gone dissatisfied away.<sup>1</sup>

Above all things Catherine desired peace, and with this aim she entered upon the path of toleration, aided by the Chancellor de l'Hôpital; intending to utilise for her own advantage that potent force which her husband had done his best to annihilate. She stood between the Bourbons and the Guises, mistrusting them equally, and endeavouring to secure her safety by nicely balancing one against the other; and she saw in the Reform movement only a useful make-weight with which she might turn the scale now this way, and now that. The Estates met at Orleans in December, 1560, and the Chancellor's opening speech unmistakably indicated the new policy inaugurated with the new reign. While allowing the impossibility of two religions existing peacefully side by side,<sup>2</sup> he held out hopes of a council which should so deal with vexed points that its decision might be accepted by all; in the meantime he urged the majority to remember that the knife avails little in a spiritual struggle and that there is no argument so convincing as a good life, and he appealed to both parties to do away "with the diabolic names of Lutheran, Huguenot, Papist," and to keep to the name of Christian. In the following April an edict was published which forbade

<sup>1</sup> *Rel. A. V.* vol. ii. p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> "C'est folie d'espérer paix repos et amytié entre les personnes qui sont de diverses religions. . . . La division de religion . . . eslogne le sujet de porter obéissance à son roi et engendre les rébellions."—De l'Hôpital, *Œuvres Comp.* vol. vi. pp. 397, 398.

all acts of violence, all mutual insults; every one was to be free to do as he liked in his own house so long as he paid outward respect to the rites of the national church, and no one was to inquire into his neighbour's faith; an amnesty was proclaimed for all past religious offences, and exiles were permitted to return, provided they lived in future "catholicly and without scandal." The Huguenots were now encouraged to ask for a greater privilege, the right of public worship, and though the edict of July, 1561, denied their request, the council decided against them by a majority of only three votes; and in the meantime infractions of the edict were tacitly encouraged.<sup>1</sup> At Fontainebleau, Condé and Coligny held services in their apartments under the eyes of the Regent without rebuke; in Paris itself the Duchess of Ferrara's preachers addressed immense audiences in spite of the remonstrances of the Nuncio and the Spanish ambassador. In August, 1561, the Chancellor declared that he had changed his opinion, and that he no longer held that the welfare of the State required unity of faith. "Is it not possible," asked the Apostle of Toleration boldly, "that a man may be a good citizen without being a Catholic, or even a Christian?"<sup>2</sup> The great edict of January, 1562, is

<sup>1</sup> "Les Huguenots montrèrent une si grande audace, présomption et orgueil que le reste du peuple ne les eût osé regarder ni rien dire contraire à leurs volontés."  
—Claude Haton, *Mémoires*.

<sup>2</sup> De l'Hôpital, *Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 451, Paris 1824: "Plusieurs peuvent estre cives qui non erunt christiani; mesme l'excommunié ne laisse pas d'estre citoyen. Et peult on vivre en repos avec ceulx qui sont de diverses opinions, comme nous voyons en une famille où ceulx qui sont des catholiques ne cessent pas d'aimer ceulx de la religion nouvelle."

a landmark in the history of religious freedom in France ; for while it enjoined the Reformed to restore all church property, to abstain from scandalous and seditious acts, and forbade them to build temples, it definitely recognised their organisation, and granted them, under certain restrictions, the right of public worship.

De l'Hôpital's wise and generous legislation came too late to save his country. The hostility between the two factions was already too intense to be allayed either by argument or persuasion, and neither party responded whole-heartedly to his appeal. Brawls and riots broke out all over the kingdom ; in some places the Huguenots were mobbed and massacred, in others, the Catholic churches were plundered and the monks ill-treated,—reprisals which drew upon the Reformed Calvin's sternest censure.<sup>1</sup> On Sunday the 1st of March, 1562, the Duke of Guise passed through the little town of Vassy,<sup>2</sup> in Champagne, on his way to Paris and stopped to hear mass. Some six or seven hundred Huguenots were worshipping in a neighbouring barn, and the sound of their hymns disturbed the Duke's devotions. A couple of his attendants desired them to interrupt their service ; the Huguenots, who had the law on their side, refused ; angry words were exchanged, and presently the Duke's people drew their swords on the unarmed Huguenots, who defended themselves with sticks and stones.

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres Françaises* : "To the Pastors of Lyons," 13th May, 1562, etc.

<sup>2</sup> There are various accounts of this incident, and there is some ground for believing that the attack was premeditated.



Guise, arriving to ask the cause of the disturbance, was struck on the cheek by a stone, and his infuriated followers retaliated by shooting down their adversaries without regard to sex or age. About sixty were killed and two hundred wounded ; and the triumphal entry of the Duke into Paris a fortnight later, at the head of a considerable force, contrary to Catherine's express order, gave colour to the Huguenot belief that the incident was a deliberate defiance of the January edict, and consequently of the Regent's authority. Catherine believed herself in danger and appealed to Condé for protection, then, changing her mind, she refused to commit herself to the Huguenots, who none the less took up arms to defend the edict. Within six weeks of the massacre of Vassy, the first civil war began.

The war broke out in the spring of 1562, and the chief event in it, the battle of Dreux, was doubly gratifying to Francis of Guise, since it not only gained him the credit of having saved Paris, but delivered him from his only military rival, the Constable, who was taken prisoner by Condé. Regardless of Catherine's wish for an armistice, the Duke pushed on to the siege of Orleans, where d'Andelot, Coligny's brother, was commanding. The faubourgs were taken, and it was thought certain the place must fall in twenty-four hours, when, on the evening of the 18th of February, as Guise was returning from an inspection of his camp, a bullet fired from behind a hedge inflicted a mortal wound. He was carried to his lodging, where his wife and his eldest son Henry,

a boy of twelve, met him ; the boy burst into tears and his father kissed him, saying gently, "My son, may God make you a good man." He died on the 24th of February, leaving, by his marriage with Anne d'Este,<sup>1</sup> four sons and one daughter ; he requested on his deathbed that his son might succeed to his offices, and as Catherine, amid the frantic manifestations of grief at his loss, dared not incur the opprobrium of refusing, the new Duke became at once Grand Master, Grand Chamberlain, Governor of Champagne and Brie, and captain of a company of men-at-arms. "My God !" cried the Cardinal, who was at Trent, when he heard the news, "Thou hast taken the innocent brother and left the guilty !"

## II

Henry of Guise passed his earliest years at Joinville, in the care of his grandmother, Antoinette de Bourbon, who had lived since her husband's death in almost conventual seclusion. Her days were spent in almsgiving, prayer, and penance, her coffin stood in the gallery which connected her apartment with the chapel, that she might look on it daily as she went to mass, and she rejected her children's kisses

<sup>1</sup> Her father was Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara ; her mother, Renée of France, younger daughter of Louis XII. The children of Francis of Guise and Anne d'Este were : Henry, Prince of Joinville, who succeeded as third Duke of Guise, born 31st Dec. 1550 ; Charles, Marquis, afterwards Duke, of Mayenne, born March, 1554 ; Louis, Cardinal of Guise, born July, 1555 ; Francis, born Dec. 1558, died Oct. 1573 ; Catherine Mary, born July, 1552, married Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier.

with ascetic severity. "Why," she would ask, "should you wish to embrace a handful of dry dust?" But it was soon evident that her grandson was not inclined to imitate this life of pious devotion; the reports of the Duke's military exploits which brightened, from time to time, the grey stillness of the castle precincts, awakened other aspirations in the child's heart. "I have heard," he wrote to his father at six years old, "some fine sermons from my uncle at Rheims, but I cannot repeat them to you, for I assure you they were so long I don't remember half that he said. He made me put on his robe and asked me if I would not like to be a canon of Rheims, but I said I would rather be with you, breaking a lance or a sword on some brave Spaniard, to try the strength of my arm; for I would rather break lances than be shut up in an abbey in a monk's frock. . . . I have been rather good lately. . . . You told my grandmother I was obstinate, but Fossé proves just the contrary, for if I was, he would certainly thrash me."<sup>1</sup>

From Joinville, the boy, remarkable already for his angelic beauty, was sent to Paris, to study at the College of Navarre, where the two other Henrys, of Valois and Bourbon,<sup>2</sup> were his schoolfellows. He does not seem to have ever been a favourite in the royal family, judging by the glimpse which Margaret

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Gaignières, Qtd. Bouillé, vol. ii. p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Henry of Valois, Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III., born 20th Sept. 1551; Henry of Bourbon, Prince of Béarn, afterwards Henry IV., born 13th Dec. 1553; Henry of Lorraine, Prince of Joinville, afterwards Duke of Guise, born 31st Dec. 1550.

of Valois gives us<sup>1</sup> of her future lover. She was sitting one day, a child of seven, on her father's knee, when he bade her choose which she would have for her cavalier,—the prince of Joinville or the marquis of Beaupré, who were both playing near the King. "I told him I would rather have the marquis. He said, 'Why? He is not so handsome.' For the prince of Joinville was fair and white, and the marquis had brown hair and a brown complexion. I said, 'Because he is better behaved; the other is never happy except when he is in mischief, and wherever he is he must be master.' A certain augury," the princess adds, "of that which we have since seen." Henry's schooldays were soon over, for as soon as the Peace of Câteau Cambrésis (April, 1559) ended the war with Spain, the Duke of Guise returned to Paris, and his son became thenceforth his constant companion. The boy went everywhere with him, following the course of events with unchildlike attention, and very early discovering so subtle an apprehension and so hungry a craving for power, that his father himself grew afraid of the strange thoughts that filled that young head.

Soon after the death of Guise, Catherine made peace with the Huguenots (Treaty of Amboise, 12th of March, 1563) on terms which scandalised the Catholics without satisfying Coligny; but she tried to reassure the first by hinting that the peace was only a temporary expedient, arranged with a view to the total suppression of heresy later on,<sup>2</sup> and to soothe

<sup>1</sup> Marguérite de Valois, *Mém. et Lettres*, ed. Guessarn, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> "On pourra beaucoup mieux châtier ces gens-là, quand ils seront désarmes et

the other by hopes of larger concessions in the near future. Poltrot's bullet had relieved her of much anxiety, for while Guise lived she had never felt safe. "To this hour," wrote Chantonnay to Granvelle, "she is persuaded that M. de Guise wanted to take possession of the kingdom ; an absurd idea."<sup>1</sup> Francis of Guise was by far the most popular member of his family ; the Cardinal, who was absent at the Council of Trent at the time of the Duke's death, had neither the confidence nor the affection of his party, and the other brothers had no political talent. Catherine felt, therefore, that she might now safely indulge her jealous dislike of the family. When the Cardinal arrived at Fontainebleau early in 1564, he was kept waiting two hours for an audience, and other deliberate slights followed, which showed him how little he had to expect at court. Much cast down by Catherine's ill-will and by the favour shown to the Huguenots, who appeared to be carrying all before them, the Cardinal sent his nephews to Joinville and retired to Rheims, where he devoted himself with exemplary zeal to his episcopal duties.

But Catherine had not waited for the Cardinal's return to prove to the Guises that their credit was gone ; the way in which she had met their demand for justice in the matter of the Duke's murder had indicated it plainly enough. The assassin had been

dispersés, outre qu'il est fort expédient de les décréditer auprès des Anglais et des Allemands. . . . Le connétable fait voir que la nécessité oblige la cour de signer cet accord mais qu'on y remédiera dans la suite."—*Letters of the Nuncio, Santa Croce, Arch. Curieuses*, vol. vi. p. 136.

<sup>1</sup> Chantonnay to Granvelle, 17th Aug. 1563.



arrested a few hours after the crime was committed ; he was a young man named Poltrot de Méré, who had lived so long in Spain that he could pass as a Spaniard. He was a relation of the La Renaudie who organised the conspiracy of Amboise and was executed for it ; and “ he had spoken lightly a long time before he went to Lyons in every place that he would surely kill Guise.” “ His besetting sin was boastfulness . . . and he jested so continually that all he said was thought to be mad talk.”<sup>1</sup> He came into the Huguenot camp professing himself a convert to the Reformed faith, and Coligny agreed to employ him as a spy ; he then presented himself to Guise as a Huguenot who had returned to the true religion, and was equally well received, sitting at the Duke’s table and riding in his train. On his arrest he confessed not only that he was guilty but that he had an accomplice ; he said he had assassinated Guise at Coligny’s instigation.

The Admiral at once gave the murderer’s statement an unqualified denial,<sup>2</sup> and demanded to be confronted with his accuser. He expressed the greatest alarm lest the latter should be executed before the charge had been properly investigated, and his fears were justified. Almost insane with terror at the horrible torments in store for him, Poltrot made various confused statements, now withdrawing and now repeating his accusations, desperately struggling to gain even a brief respite ; but sentence was passed on him when Coligny was still in Normandy

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. de Soubise.*

<sup>2</sup> *Mém. de Condé*, vol. iv. p. 286.

and the peace barely signed, and he was put to death on the 18th of March. Coligny then repeated his formal declaration of innocence. It was true, he said, that he had given money to Poltrot, but he had hired him as a spy and not as an assassin. It was true that he had heard Poltrot bragging that he was man enough to kill the Duke with his own hand, but he had thought it "frivolous talk," not worth noticing. He had himself warned Guise (as Madame de Guise knew) more than once of designs on his life,<sup>1</sup> but since he had learned that the Lorrainers were plotting to assassinate Condé, d'Andelot, and himself, he had not taken the trouble to dissuade any who happened to say in his hearing that they would kill Guise if they could. He declared nevertheless on his honour and his life that he had never "sough: out, incited, or solicited any one" to do the crime, "either by words, money, or promises, personally or by others, directly or indirectly."<sup>2</sup> He added, however, that it must not be inferred that he regretted the Duke's death, for he considered it "the greatest good that could have befallen this kingdom, the Church of God, and in particular himself and his own house."

The candour of this avowal alarmed Coligny's friends, but they urged him in vain to modify it. He said that if an inquiry was held later on and he

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, vol. iv. p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> "Quand il a ouï dire à quelqu'un que, s'il pouvait, il tueroit ledit Seigneur de Guise, jusques en son camp, il ne l'en a destourné, mais sur son honneur et sur sa vie il ne se trouvera que jamais il ait recherché, induit, ni sollicité quelqu'un à ce faire, ni de paroles ni de l'argent, ni par promesses, par soy ni par autrui, directement ou indirectement."—*Mém. de Condé*, vol. iv. p. 292.

was then obliged to disclose his real sentiment, any conventional expressions of regret he might have uttered would certainly be construed into wilful falsehood: it was better, he thought, to say all there was to say at once. But whatever his motive, the brutal frankness of his statement exasperated the Duke's relations beyond measure; and they had no hesitation in accepting the wild and contradictory assertions of a half-crazy criminal, against the Admiral's word of honour. Long after Poltrot's execution, they were clamouring for vengeance on the man they regarded as directly responsible for the Duke's death; and in September, as the King was leaving the church at Meulan, in which he had been hearing vespers, he encountered a long procession in the deepest mourning, headed by the old Duchess Antoinette and by the widowed Duchess of Guise, who threw themselves at his feet, entreating that justice might be done "for the cruel and inhuman murder of Francis of Lorraine." The King promised vaguely that he would attend to their petition; but after much discussion the inquiry was postponed for three years, by which time, Catherine explained, the King would be old enough to conduct it himself. The decision was not prompted only by a wish to disappoint the Guises, for the question of jurisdiction was, in fact, a very awkward one; but they naturally considered it a scandalous affront. Some time after his return it occurred to the Cardinal to test the feeling of the capital by making a sort of public entry with his nephews, the Duke of Guise and the Marquis of Mayenne, in the absence of the

court, then on its way to Bayonne ; but the result was not encouraging. François de Montmorency, the Constable's eldest son, who had succeeded his cousin Coligny as Governor of Paris, refused to allow the Cardinal to enter with a larger train than the regulations of the city permitted ; and as no attention was paid to his warning, he sent a troop of horse to the Rue St. Denis to disperse the procession. The Cardinal seeing his retinue disarmed and scattered, fled in terror into the nearest house, dragging his unwilling nephews with him ; and quitted Paris next day in undignified haste before daybreak, amid the derisive laughter of the populace, who sided, according to invariable custom, with the victor. With the gibes of the Parisians ringing in his ears, the young Duke went back to Joinville, to console himself as best he could with his father's motto, *To each his turn*.

He went to Vienna in the following year, in the hope of seeing some fighting with the Turks, and was the object of many polite attentions, especially from Chantonnay, the Spanish ambassador ; but, tired of the inaction of the Imperial forces, he came home again in the spring of 1567. Shortly before his departure for Vienna, Catherine had persuaded the Duke of Aumale and the Duchess of Guise (then on the eve of her marriage with the Duke of Nemours<sup>1</sup>) to consent to a formal reconciliation with the Admiral ; she brought them together at Moulins

<sup>1</sup> James of Savoy, Duke of Nemours. They were married on the 5th May 1566.

(January, 1566), and after Coligny had once more solemnly affirmed, "as in the presence of God and on his honour," that he had no share, direct or indirect, in the murder of Francis of Guise, the Guises and the Châtillons embraced each other, to the great satisfaction of the Queen-mother, who had thus proved herself able to control the enmities of the most powerful subjects in the kingdom. It was true that d'Aumale was heard to say that he would have much preferred to settle with the Admiral sword in hand, that d'Andelot accused d'Aumale of hiring an assassin to shoot him, that Montmorency only gave his hand to the Cardinal because his father threatened to disinherit him if he refused, and that none of the late Duke's children were present; but Catherine was not disturbed by any of these details. She realised, no doubt, that a sincerer reconciliation would not have answered her purpose so well, and she was able to pose as a peacemaker, while knowing that there would be no difficulty in renewing the quarrel should she ever desire to do so. The outbreak of the second civil war (September, 1567) offered Guise the opportunity he longed for, but he made little of it. He was sent with his uncle d'Aumale to the north-eastern frontier, where Coligny was trying to effect a junction with his German auxiliaries, and was charged to prevent the Huguenots from crossing the Seine. Deceived by a feint of attack on Sens, he hastened to defend the place, and the Admiral, turning swiftly on his steps, crossed safely a little higher up. Guise, indignant at the



success of the ruse, pursued the enemy, engaged him imprudently with too small a force, and was forced to retreat ; his fault was excused on account of his youth and inexperience, but it was none the less an unfortunate beginning.<sup>1</sup>

On the death of the Constable at the battle of St. Denis (November, 1567), Catherine had refused to fill his vacant office ; but she persuaded the King to give his brother Anjou, her favourite son, the command of the army, with the title of lieutenant-general. When, at the end of the six months' peace, the third civil war began (September, 1568), and the prince took the field, with Tavannes to direct his operations, the marshal found himself gravely embarrassed by the young nobles who flocked to the standard to volunteer their services, without the most rudimentary notions of tactics or discipline. Perhaps the worst offender among them was Henry of Guise. Much against Tavannes's will he had obtained the command of eighteen companies of men-at-arms, and more than one repetition of the blunder he had made in his first campaign resulted from the reckless impatience which carried him, at all risks, into the van of the battle. The disaster of Roche-Abeille (June, 1569) was attributed chiefly to his insubordination ; without orders, Guise and Martigues led a force of two hundred horse across the stream that divided them from the Huguenot position, and they were followed (also without orders) by a regiment of infantry. Suddenly confronted by the

<sup>1</sup> Tavannes, *Mém.* vol. iii. p. 16, éd. Petitot.

Huguenot cavalry, four thousand strong, the Duke's men-at-arms broke and fled, leaving the foot-soldiers to bear the brunt of the charge; the loss was considerable and Guise returned to the camp to be greeted by Tavannes with a word of stinging reproach. "Sir," said the old soldier, "after doing what you have done, you ought never to have come back."<sup>1</sup>

Bent on distinguishing himself somehow, Guise caught at the opportunity of the siege of Poitiers, and without waiting for Anjou's permission, he threw himself with his brother Mayenne into the place which Coligny was besieging; and here indeed he showed something of his father's genius. For more than six weeks he held the ill-fortified town, until Coligny was glad to take the excuse offered him in the attack of the royal forces on Châtelheraut to raise the siege. By the following summer both parties were equally exhausted, and peace was concluded on the 18th of August, 1570.

In the admiration evoked by the defence of Poitiers, the faults committed by Guise earlier in the war were quickly forgotten, or rather the impetuous valour they evinced was set down to the young man's credit, while the consequences they had entailed were overlooked. And indeed much darker crimes than these would have been readily pardoned in one so clearly singled out by Nature for the part of popular hero. To a commanding stature<sup>2</sup> and extraordinary physical

<sup>1</sup> Tavannes, *Mém.* vol. iii. p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 639: "Una maiesta mirabile di viso, gli occhi vivaci, capelli biondi e crespi. . . . In tutti gli esercizi del corpo riesce con tanta garbatura e leggiadria ch' ognun lo mira con stupore." Compare Tasso's description of him:—

strength, Henry of Guise united the delicate beauty and the southern grace of his Borgia ancestors; Francis of Guise was thin and dark, his complexion almost olive,—his son had Lucrezia's yellow curls.<sup>1</sup> The twin passions that had consumed his boyhood—the hunger for power, the fiercer hunger for revenge—had left no trace of bitterness or melancholy upon him. He spoke ill of no one, and he never refused a favour; it was impossible to resist his good temper, the subtle brightness of his smile, his caressing tones. He asked nothing better than (with one exception) to be friends with all the world, and all the world (with one exception) was ready to be friends with him. The first was Coligny, the second was Henry of Anjou.

The prince had been deeply angered by Guise's studied disregard of his orders; and he had resented even more keenly the share awarded to Guise of the applause which had greeted the victors of Jarnac. Tavannes knew better than to dispute the honours of the campaign, to which he had the best title, with his young master, but Guise had no such scruples. He was bent on arresting attention, on forcing France to look at him and to recognise in him his father's son; to this end he had risked his life and the lives of others in twenty foolhardy

“Per ch' altri cerchi peregrino errantò,  
La bella Europa ove 'l di poggio o 'nchini,  
Meraviglie maggior, de' biondi crini,  
Non vide ancora o di sì bel sembiante.”

Tasso saw him in Paris in 1571.

<sup>1</sup> His mother was Lucrezia's granddaughter. Her sister, Leonora d'Este, was Tasso's Leonora.

exploits, impelled less by the rashness of youth than by the deliberate recklessness of a man bent on winning a great prize at all hazards. If people wondered at his courage, if the Pope thanked him for his services, if military men compared the defence of Poitiers to the defence of Metz, so much the better ; he had no intention of waiving an atom of his claims. Short of this, he was willing to do anything to gain the favour of the prince ; but Anjou's wounded vanity was not easily healed or his suspicions soon dispelled. Guise did not write verses like the King, nor dance as elegantly as Monsieur, but in most other accomplishments—in riding and swimming and swordsmanship—he was easily first ;<sup>1</sup> and the pale, black-haired sons of the royal house, with their morbid brains and frail physique, all looked askance at their vigorous antagonist, whose singular air of distinction made a great lady declare that all princes looked plebeian beside the stately cadet of Lorraine.

The matter of his nephew's marriage had long been occupying the attention of the Cardinal, who had hoped that Henry might find a bride during his travels in Germany in 1566. Henry, however, had written to him to explain that though during his visit to Munich he had seen several young and well-bred princesses, he had not had time to make himself very agreeable to them or to think much about marriage. A year later he was reported by the Spanish ambassador to be paying marked attention to Catherine of Clèves, the widow of the Prince of Portien, one of the three

<sup>1</sup> “Nel giucar d' arme non è chi li possa resistere.”—*Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 637.

daughters<sup>1</sup> of the Duke of Nevers and Marguerite of Bourbon, Anthony of Navarre's sister, who had been brought up in the household of the dowager-duchess of Guise. Her husband, whose death at six-and-twenty had been a notable loss to the Huguenot party, had made his wife a last request. "You are young and beautiful and rich," said the dying man; "you will have many suitors when I am gone, and I have nothing to say against your marrying again, if only it is not the Duke of Guise. Let not my worst enemy inherit what of all my possessions I have loved the most." Whether it was respect for this injunction, or, as is more probable, a certain hesitation on the part of Guise to bind himself too early, is not known, but three years later Catherine was still a widow and Guise had apparently abandoned his suit. In the middle of the third civil war his only sister had married the Duke of Montpensier, whose rank (he was a Bourbon) made it a good match, in spite of the forty years difference in the ages of bride and bridegroom, and for his nephew the Cardinal had now still higher hopes. In May, 1570, the Spanish ambassador, who always kept a watchful eye upon Guise, wrote to his sovereign,<sup>2</sup> "There is nothing talked of publicly in France but the marriage of Madame Marguerite with the Duke of Guise."

The youngest daughter of Henry II. and Catherine de' Medici was then in the full pride of that sensuous

<sup>1</sup> The eldest sister, Henrietta, married Louis Gonzaga, son of the Duke of Mantua, who took the title of Duke of Nevers on the death of his brother-in-law. The youngest sister, Mary, married Henry, Prince of Condé.

<sup>2</sup> *Papiers de Simancas*.—Bouillé, vol. ii. p. 462.



beauty which one of her admirers<sup>1</sup> judged "divine rather than human, but more likely to lose men's souls than to save them." She had been destined almost from her cradle to become the wife of Jeanne d'Albret's son, the Prince of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV.; and though the Queen of Navarre's conversion to the Reformed faith had interrupted the plan, it had never been wholly abandoned. In the meantime Margaret had other lovers, none of whom had been treated quite as kindly as the Duke of Guise; the intimacy had gone so far that there were rumours of a secret marriage, and in the summer of 1570 the Cardinal told the Legate that "the principal persons concerned were already agreed,"<sup>2</sup> and boasted openly that "the head of their house had married the elder sister, and the cadet should have the cadette."<sup>3</sup> If we may believe Margaret's story,<sup>4</sup> her brother Anjou gave the Duke privately much encouragement and arranged frequent opportunities for the lovers to meet, and when he judged that they were fully compromised, brought the matter before the King.

The information threw Charles into one of those fits of excitement, hardly distinguishable from insanity, to which he was subject. He vowed that nothing but the death of Guise could atone for his presumption, and sending for his half-brother, the Bastard of Angoulême, he ordered him to kill Guise while they hunted together next day. Some one

<sup>1</sup> *Don John of Austria*.—Brantôme.

<sup>2</sup> Mathieu, bk. vi. ch. ix.

<sup>3</sup> "L'ainé a eu l'ainée, le cadet aura la cadette." In allusion to the marriage of Charles II., Duke of Lorraine, with Claude of France, Margaret's elder sister.

<sup>4</sup> Marguërite de Valois, *Mém. et Lettres*, p. 22.

warned the Duke and he did not hunt, but in the evening he presented himself as usual at the Louvre, where he met with so rude a reception that he resolved to prove without delay that he had no idea of aspiring to the hand of the princess. It was Margaret who suggested the only expedient which could save them both, and she wrote to her sister Claude, the Duchess of Lorraine, to beg her aid in carrying it out at once.<sup>1</sup> The marriage of the Duke of Guise with the Princess of Portien was immediately announced, and the ceremony was performed on the 30th of September.

The King received this proof of Guise's good faith with apparent satisfaction, and all the royal family was present at the fête given a few days later by the Cardinal, but very shortly afterwards the Spanish ambassador reported that the Cardinal had not so much as "a spoonful of influence,"<sup>2</sup> and in the spring of 1571 the whole family left the court. For some time their exclusion from affairs was complete; nothing was heard of them in Paris, and it was said the Cardinal might have been dead, so seldom was his name uttered. They seem, however, to have maintained their usual cheerfulness, and the Cardinal of Guise tells a correspondent that neither he nor his nephews were giving way to melancholy, but amused themselves very well, in wet weather with music, in fine weather with hunting; only Mayenne took little pleasure in the chase and went with them as seldom

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. et Lettres.*

<sup>2</sup> "On ne luy donnoit pas cueillère en tout."—*Pap. de Sim.*; Bouillé, vol. ii. p. 473.

as possible. In August there were great rejoicings at Joinville over the birth of the Duke's eldest son.<sup>1</sup>

For some months after the close of the third civil war, the leaders of the Reformed had remained at La Rochelle; it was not till the autumn of 1571 that Coligny yielded to the persuasions of La Noue, Teligny, and Count Louis of Nassau, and agreed to meet the King at Blois. The fact that his cousins, the Montmorencys, since the peace had "carried the whole sway of the Court,"<sup>2</sup> and that the Guises were quite out of favour, encouraged him to believe that Charles sincerely desired his presence; and to those who reminded him of the fate of Egmont and Horn, he replied that he trusted the King's word, adding that in any case it was better to die than to live in fear of dying. He arrived at Blois on the 12th of September, and was received most graciously. When he would have knelt to the King, Charles prevented him, and taking his hand assured him that it was the happiest day of his life, and that he hoped that now all civil wars were entirely ended. "We have you now," he said with a smile, "and you cannot escape us even if you would." The King's brothers, Anjou and Alençon, also received him "civilly enough," and Catherine treated him with the respect due to an able adversary. "You cannot trust me any more than I can trust you," she

<sup>1</sup> Charles, afterwards fourth Duke of Guise.

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham to Leicester, the 29th Aug. 1570; Digges, *Compleat Ambassador*, p. 8.

said to him frankly, "and still I assure you that if I see in you henceforward a faithful servant of the King, you may count, as God is my witness, on my support and favour."<sup>1</sup> She then declared that her chief desire was to see the country at peace, which could never be the case until the two families of Châtillon and Guise were at one; the Admiral had nothing against it, and she sent an envoy to Joinville to suggest to the Guises that since they had gone without their revenge for eight years, they might as well renounce it altogether, and to inform them that they would be very welcome at the court if they came with no more than their usual retinue.

The Guises replied by warmly protesting their loyal submission to the King's will; they would make a point of obeying him in the matter of their following, "if not only all the forces of the kingdom but if all Christendom desired to honour them with their company;"<sup>2</sup> of their actual intention as regarded what Catherine called "an appeasement" in the matter of Coligny, they said nothing. In December Montmorency wrote to inform the King that the partisans of Lorraine were gathering in Paris in large numbers, and he suspected an attack on Châtillon, where the Admiral was spending Christmas; adding that if anything of the kind occurred he should certainly place himself at his cousin's service. Coligny, who had been also advised to be on his guard, wrote to Charles that, in spite of these reports, he had besides his guard of twenty-five musketeers and his

<sup>1</sup> In Delaborde, *Gaspard de Coligny*.

In Bouillé, vol. ii.

own household, only a dozen gentlemen with him, "although, had it not been for the promise I made your Majesty, I could easily find the means of saving those trouble who talk of coming to besiege me in my own house, by going half-way to meet them ; but I have a great desire to keep the peace of your kingdom."<sup>1</sup> There was a moment of anxious suspense ended by the announcement that the Duke of Guise, with his brother and his uncles, had entered the capital with five hundred men. From Paris in January they sent their reply to Catherine's inquiry as to their disposition towards the Admiral ; in this letter,<sup>2</sup> which was signed by Guise, d'Aumale, and Mayenne, they reminded the King of the services rendered to him and to his predecessors by their family, and denied that they had ever been the troublers of the kingdom ; they would prefer to settle their difference with the Admiral in the way generally adopted by men of honour, but if this did not please his Majesty, they requested him to appoint a court of honour, consisting of his brothers, the marshals of France and other officers, who would inform the Duke and his kinsmen what they would do in like case. Charles did not adopt either of these suggestions. The judicial combat of the Middle Ages had received its death-blow nearly twenty years before in the encounter between Jarnac and La Chataigneraye ; and the shirt and sword duel which Guise demanded was a preposterous suggestion, considering that eight years separated the offence and the challenge, and that a

<sup>1</sup> In Delaborde, *Gaspard de Coligny*, vol. iii.

<sup>2</sup> In Bouillé, vol. ii.



formal explanation had been accepted in the interval by the representatives of the family. A royal declaration of the 27th of March confirmed the decision of Moulins,<sup>1</sup> pointing out that no reason for reopening the inquiry had arisen, and the Guises decided for the moment to go no farther. Their warlike preparations came suddenly to an end; the Cardinals of Lorraine and Guise set out for Rome to assist at the election of Pius V.'s successor; Mayenne joined Don John of Austria at Corfu, to fight the Turks; Guise remained quietly in Paris, where the court found him on its arrival in May. How uneasy Catherine was about him in the meantime is plain from a statement she made to Sir Thomas Smith, in March. Some one had told the English ambassador that Guise had visited Alva at Brussels in disguise. "Saith the Queen, He has not, for by reason of his treaty of accord (with the Admiral) which hath been long time in doing and yet taketh that small success, every four daies we either hear from him or send to him, so that we know certainly where he is, and that he was not there."<sup>2</sup>

Coligny had spent most of the winter and spring at Châtillon, but in June the illness of the Queen of Navarre, who had come to Paris to complete the preparations for her son's marriage with the Princess Margaret (which had been arranged after long negotiation), recalled him to Paris. For the first time since the death of Francis of Guise, Coligny and the son of the murdered man were

<sup>1</sup> Delaborde, vol. iii. App. p. 607.

<sup>2</sup> Digges, p. 197.

brought together ; but though they often met and sometimes sat at the same table, it was observed that they never exchanged words.<sup>1</sup> It was observed also that Anjou and Guise were now on excellent terms—a circumstance which disquieted the Admiral's friends not a little. Coligny, however, had many things to think of besides his feud with the Guises. Restored to his place at the council board, and enjoying the full confidence of his sovereign, he was exerting all the force of his indomitable will to save France from a renewal of that awful suffering, the remembrance of which had led him to assure those who were concerned about his personal safety, that he would rather be dragged through the gutters of Paris than witness it again.

The first and second civil wars had been of brief duration ; the third lasted longer and was waged in a fiercer spirit. "In the first," says d'Aubigné, in a stern summary of the past, "we fought like angels, in the second like men, in the third like devils." The treaty of St. Germain had ordered the erasing of all offensive inscriptions, but the exasperating recollections which were written deep in the hearts of those who had been engaged in the struggle could not be quickly effaced ; too many estates had changed hands, too much blood had been shed. All over the country mutual ill-will had reached an intolerable pitch, and there were bitter complaints of infractions of the Edict and attempts at private

<sup>1</sup> Ambassador of Savoy's letter in La Ferrière, *Le seizième siècle et les Valois*, 21st June 1572.

revenge. At Orange, for instance, there was a riot that lasted three days ; at Rouen, another in which five Huguenots lost their lives ; at Troyes, a child which had been baptized by a Huguenot pastor was stabbed to death on the nurse's breast ; these were some of the signs that indicated the national discord. There was only one remedy—a foreign war ; so much was evident to all who were not blinded by interest or prejudice ; the Venetian knew it, the Spaniard knew it ; Coligny, in an anguish of apprehension, urged it in season and out. Other nations, he insisted,<sup>1</sup> on the conclusion of peace, would go back to the trades they had abandoned, but Frenchmen who had once girt on sword were loath to put it off ; if occupation were not found for these envenomed spirits, they would find it for themselves within their own borders. Both parties had united at the close of the second war to recover Havre from the English ; they would unite as readily now if some similar object were presented. It was not a choice between peace and war, but between a civil war or a foreign one. Whom should they fight ? There was no territorial object in a conflict with England now ; the Empire was judged “too hard a bone to crack” ; but a quarrel with Spain offered at that moment an excellent prospect of recovering the provinces of Artois and Flanders, to whose loss the French had never resigned themselves, “considering them, so to

<sup>1</sup> The memorial to the King containing Coligny's plea for the foreign war was probably drawn up by Du Plessis Mornay. It is in his *Mém. et Corresp.* vol. ii. p. 20.

speak, as a suburb of Paris.”<sup>1</sup> The Netherland towns, already in revolt, would welcome the invaders ; in the Prince of Orange they would find an eager and efficient ally ; and England, who had no wish to see the French in Flanders, was to be propitiated (according to Count Louis of Nassau’s scheme) by the annexation of Zeeland, “the key of the Low Countries,” and perhaps Holland, while, in return for the help of the German Protestant princes, Brabant and the other provinces were to revert to the Empire, under the rule of the Prince of Orange.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a war with Spain was in itself popular enough, but there was a grave objection to a war with Spain in the Low Countries. The Netherlanders were not only patriots defending their ancient liberties : they were also, in the eyes of the orthodox, heretics in arms against the faith ; the defeat of Spain in the Netherlands would mean the triumph of heresy, and the material gain to France the spiritual loss of Christendom. Further, it was not unreasonable that the King’s officers should hesitate to engage in an enterprise whose moving spirit was the great rebel ; when Tavannes refused to follow the lead of “the vanquished of Moncontour and Jarnac,” he expressed the sentiments of many loyal and honourable men. Neither those who pressed the scheme nor those who opposed it could foresee what weighty issues

<sup>1</sup> Pasquier, *Lettres*, bk. v. letter 1 : “Si nous estions bien avisez il y auroit maintenant matière de réunir [l’estat de Flanders] au nostre. . . . Nous le recognoissons estre de l’ancienne domaine de nostre couronne, par manière de dire, un faubourg de Paris.”

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham to Leicester, 12th Aug. 1571 ; in Digges, pp. 127, 128.

hung upon the decision, which rested with the young King.

The accession of Charles IX. had been greeted by both Catholics and Protestants with more than conventional rejoicing, and the anxious watchers round the throne had united in pronouncing him a child of the greatest promise. "You would not believe," said the Duchess of Ferrara<sup>1</sup> to the English ambassador, "what rare qualities he shows, even at this early age"; and the Venetian, Michiel, reported to his government<sup>2</sup> that though it was too soon to prophesy, those who knew him were of opinion that he would do very well indeed. "He has beautiful eyes, like his father, his movements are easy and graceful but he is not very strong; he eats and drinks little, and is easily fatigued; he is a charming child." Michiel's successor, Suriano, was still more favourably impressed. "The King shows in all his actions much nobility of mind; his speech is gentle, his expression bright and pleasing; much is to be hoped for if he lives, provided he is not spoilt and his interests ruined by the negligence and malice of others. . . . I say if he lives and if he is not spoilt, for it is to be feared that one or other will be his fortune."<sup>3</sup>

The prediction of Nostradamus, that all Catherine's sons should wear a crown, was generally interpreted to mean that none of them should live long: Charles grew up in the shadow of death, but he did not die; he was not so fortunate. From the first Catherine

<sup>1</sup> Rodocanachi, *Vie de Renée de Ferrara*, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. i. p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. i. p. 544.



intended her son to be entirely her own ; she did not love him, but so long as he occupied the throne she meant to maintain her dominion over him, and she succeeded too well. He was never allowed to be out of her sight ; she sat at his side in the Council, she rode with him to the chase, she slept in his room, enveloping the nervous imaginative child in a vigilant solicitude from which there was no escape. All her children, except Anjou, whom she idolised, were terribly afraid of their cheerful, pleasant mother, and even when Charles had been a year or two on the throne, it was noted that he dared not say yes or no without her leave.<sup>1</sup> None of her sons were healthy either in mind or in body ; the "charming child" grew up moody and violent, coarse in speech, and liable to fits of insane fury, which his mother could always provoke but could not always control ; he had a passion for hunting, which he carried to exhausting extremes,<sup>2</sup> a morbid pleasure in the sight of blood, and with these a love of poetry and of music, which was the only softening influence he knew. He had followed Catherine docilely through all her religious tergiversations, now regarded as a Huguenot all but in name, now fiercely hostile to the Reformed ; but lately he had become greatly alarmed at the marked preference she showed

<sup>1</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 119. Cf. Margaret's statement : "Nourrie avec telle crainte auprès de la Roynne ma mère que non seulement je ne luy osois parler mais quand elle me regardoit je transsissois de peur d'avoir faict chose qui luy despleust."—*Marg. Mém.* p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> "The King had entered into a Diet . . . it is his mother's drift to make him take (under pretence of physicke) some rest from his inordinate hunting so early in the morning and so late at night, without sparing frost, snow, or rain."—Smith to Burleigh, 22nd March 1572 ; Digges, p. 193.

for his brother, of whose military successes he was intensely jealous, and very impatient of her supervision. The crowned captive was dreaming of emancipation when the peace of St. Germain brought to his side the only man who could open his prison door.

There had once been some talk of making Coligny the King's governor, but Catherine had given the appointment instead to the Florentine, Gondi, afterwards Duke of Retz. She was afraid of Coligny then, but after the war she was not afraid of any one, believing herself so entirely his mistress that she felt sure of being able to change his opinions on any subject at any moment.<sup>1</sup> Coligny had not been long at court before she discovered her mistake. Suspicious of all about him, terrified of his mother's craft and his brother's ambition, surrounded by Italian fortune-hunters and Spanish spies, the forlorn young king turned with a sudden impulse of confidence to his reconciled adversary, the Huguenot leader, the most disinterested man of his day. In the austere simplicity of Coligny's character, in his steadfastness of purpose, in his haughty indifference to hostile opinion, and above all in his supreme contempt for his own personal advantage, the weak, capricious boy found a sense of relief and security. It soon appeared that the Admiral's influence was overmastering every other ; favours refused to others were daily granted

<sup>1</sup> "La Royne cognoist comme elle possède son fils, ne se donne peyne de ses opinions, s'asseure les pouvoir changer en un moment."—Tav. vol. iii. p. 192. "For that here whatsoever our Mother commandeth takes place and standeth for law . . . and therefore she must be . . . the only Messias and Mediator."—Walsingham to Leicester, March 1570 ; Digges.

at his lightest word ; Charles often addressed him as his father, and showed him the affectionate deference of a son ; it was even thought possible that the Huguenot was converting his sovereign.<sup>1</sup> Philip of Spain was dismayed to hear that the heretic outlaw for whose head the French government had not long since offered fifty thousand crowns, was now ruling everything absolutely at the court of the Most Christian King.<sup>2</sup>

Coligny on his side was fully alive to the advantage of being the King's friend, for only through the King could he achieve the ends he had striven for so long. In his dreams he saw France united at home and powerful abroad, with an army well disciplined and well treated, that should be her pride and not her curse, with a share in the dominion of the New World, a foothold perhaps in the East ; and there was an hour when the realisation of his dreams seemed not so very far off. Charles had always longed for military distinction ; as a child he had loved to talk with his father's captains of expeditions and conquests, and he was delighted at the idea of regaining his lost provinces ; he had also long resented Philip's airs of patronage. "There rise daily new causes of unkindness between

<sup>1</sup> "On murmuroit du roy et en avoit mauvais opinion touchant la religion, combien toutefois qu'il allât à la messe tous les jours."—Claude Haton, *Mém.* "On les entendit jurer, esbahis qu'ils estoient par les Changemens survenus, que le Roy deviendrait Huguenot."—*Mém. de l'Estat de France*, vol. i. p. 86. "The great hope that may be gathered of the King's revolt from Papistry."—Digges, p. 83.

■ "El conde de Res (Retz) me affirma que es el Almirante que absolutamente gobierna todo ajora, de alto al baxo."—Aguilon to Philip, in Delaborde, vol. iii. p. 344.

the two princes," Walsingham told Burleigh; "Spain seemeth to set the King here very light, which engendereth in him a great desire for revenge."<sup>1</sup> When the Spanish ambassador protested against the King's secret conferences with Count Louis of Nassau, Charles replied that Philip was misinformed, but that in any case he was not answerable to Spain. "And as for fearing us with wars, you do mistake us; let every one do therein as best liketh him." Coligny's proposal needed, therefore, the less urging; in the middle of July (1572) Genlis led a force of three thousand Frenchmen to the relief of Mons, with the King's knowledge and approval; volunteers eager to serve at their own expense, were asking every day for commissions; Navarre was in haste to get his marriage over that his friends might be off to the Netherlands; Orange was joyfully expecting the declaration of war, and the Spanish ambassador was on the point of demanding his passports, when Catherine, now fully awake to the danger of her position, gathered up her forces for the struggle. She saw with terror that the King was slipping out of her grasp; if Coligny, the pardoned rebel, could do so much, what could not be done by Coligny, loyal and victorious? And with the Huguenots in power, what had she and Anjou to expect but dismissal from power, perhaps banishment from France? She had long been accustomed to play upon her son's morbid temperament as on an instrument of which she knew every note, and long habits of subjection

<sup>1</sup> Digges, p. 111.

—for at one-and-twenty he was still a child in her presence—made it hard for him to resist her. There were tears and tender reproaches, insidious accusations, indignant threats of departure, scenes which affected Charles's nerves painfully, and ended in reluctant submission.<sup>1</sup> The news that Genlis had been defeated near Mons, thanks to Alva's friends in the French Council, added to Catherine's fears of Coligny, fresh fears of Spain,—the Parisians imagined Alva at their gates,—and the rumours that Elizabeth had resolved not to quarrel with Philip, and was about to recall her subjects from Flanders, furnished her with new arguments.<sup>2</sup> "The Queen retired in displeasure to Monceaux, the King following her trembling . . . less terrified of the Huguenots, who were said to be aiming at nothing less than the overturn of his throne, than of his mother and brother, whose craft, power, and ambition he knew very well. . . . The Queen contented herself with having disposed the King to obey her without saying any more of what was in her mind."<sup>3</sup> What she had in

<sup>1</sup> "The King . . . is grown cold, who before was very forward, inso-much as commissions were granted ready to have been sealed, for the levying of men in sundry provinces; but herein nothing prevailed so much as the tears of his mother."—Walsingham to Leicester, 10th August 1572; Digges, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> "The King had proceeded to an open dealing had he not received advertisement out of England that Her Majestie meant to revoke such of her subjects as are presently in Flanders, whereupon such of the Council here as incline to Spain have put the Q.-mother in such a fear that the enterprise cannot but miscarry without the assistance of England."—Walsingham to Burleigh; *Ibid.* Smith replies on the 22nd Aug.: "There is as yet no revocation done or meant." "Ceste defaite vole en cour, change cœurs et conseils . . . la peur des armes espagnoles saisit la reyne."—Tavannes, vol. iii. ch. xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



her mind and did not tell the King was her decision to prevent future trouble by killing Coligny.

Charles was ashamed to tell the Admiral of his sudden change of front ; to save appearances he spoke of certain important points which he had not yet fully examined, to which his mother and brother had drawn his attention ; he desired, therefore, to bring the subject of the war with Spain before the Council, that it might be fully discussed in their presence. The Council met, Coligny stated his opinion, but met with a firm and unanimous opposition ; Charles himself was with the majority, and the Huguenot could only accept the adverse decision. "Sire," he said, turning to the King, "since these present have led your Majesty not to seize an opportunity so favourable to your glory and advantage, I cannot resist your resolve, though I am sure that hereafter you will have reason to repent it." Then boldly recognising his enemy : "Madam," he said, turning to the Queen-mother, "the King refuses to enter upon one war ; God grant that he may not find himself engaged in another from which it may not be possible to withdraw at will."<sup>1</sup> Catherine made no reply ; she reserved her answer for another time and another place ; but she reported everywhere that the Admiral had insolently threatened to make war again on the King if war with Spain were not at once declared.

The death of Jeanne d'Albret early in June did not long defer her son's wedding. On the 8th of July

<sup>1</sup> Michiel, in Alberi, *Rel. dei Amb. Ven.* ser. i. vol. iv.

Henry, now King of Navarre, made his entry into Paris with his cousin Condé and eight hundred Huguenot gentlemen. On the 10th of August Condé was married at Blandy by the Huguenot rite to Marie of Clèves, the Duchess of Guise's sister, and Navarre's wedding took place on Monday the 18th. On a platform erected at the portal of Notre Dame there gathered that brilliant group whose figures stand out for ever with strange clearness against the ghastly background which history has since painted in—the lovely, reluctant bride in her jewelled robes, the mocking, little bridegroom, the troubled King; Anjou, slim and pretty, like a girl; Coligny's grey head and worn face, the tall Lorrainer with his royal air, and the Queen-mother smiling blandly upon them all with murder in her heart.

For some weeks the air had been full of strange rumours, and letters of warning had poured in upon the Admiral, who was entreated to beware of the Guises, of Catherine, of the whole court, and of the King himself. Some of the Huguenots on the point of starting for Paris had been secretly advised to stay at home, and it had been said that if the marriage was celebrated in Paris it would be a crimson wedding. The Parisians on their part viewed with much dissatisfaction the arrival of such large numbers of Huguenots within their walls, fearing that they would be "robbed and spoiled in their own houses" by the "quasi aliens," as they called the men of the South, with their unfamiliar accent, their provincial curiosity, and their ostentatious disregard of Catholic

observances.<sup>1</sup> The city in the midst of the marriage festivities was dark and troubled as the sea on the eve of a storm. On Thursday the 21st the Duke of Montmorency left Paris abruptly to go and hunt at Chantilly; Montferrand, a half-witted Huguenot gentleman, departed, telling the Admiral that he would rather be a madman than a fool; and Montgomery,<sup>2</sup> with some eighty of his friends, moved into lodgings in the Faubourg St. Germain, across the river, saying that the air was healthier there than nearer the Louvre. But amid all the flying rumours which darkened the summer air, Coligny remained unmoved;<sup>3</sup> "to say truth," writes Walsingham, "he never shewed greater magnanimity . . . in this storm he doth not give over the helm." To all entreaties to secure his safety by leaving the capital, he had the same reply. The King, he believed, was incapable of the designs imputed to him; he knew his sovereign well, and no prince of so benign a nature had ever worn the fleur-de-lys; and though the Duke of Anjou did not love the Reformed, he had hopes of seeing a change even in him; he believed he might still

<sup>1</sup> Claude Haton, *Mém.*

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel de Lorges, Count of Montgomery, son of the Scottish archer, Jacques de Lorges, who is the hero of Schiller's well-known ballad, *The Glove*.

<sup>3</sup> "The Admiral, whose mind is invincible and foreseeth what is like to issue, doth not now give over, . . . and though he cannot obtain what were necessary and requisite for the advancement of the cause, yet doth he obtain somewhat in conference with (the King); . . . if these Low Country matters be reduced to some good issue, he would not now expose himself to new perils. But the case now standing as it doth, and foreseeing the mischief that will follow, he saith he should be a traitor to God and to his country, and unthankful to her Majesty, if he should forbear to do what lieth in him to prevent the same."—Walsingham to Leicester, 10th Aug. 1572; Digges, p. 223.

regain the ground he had lost—he who had faced unflinchingly a hundred defeats ; and so long as this was possible, he would be, he said, a traitor to God and his country if he left his post. His departure from Paris would reveal such mistrust of the King, that it would certainly be the signal for a fourth war, and to that a thousand deaths would be preferable ; and in any case he had lived enough. His murderers averred afterwards that Heaven had blinded the eyes of the doomed man,<sup>1</sup> but they were mistaken ; he saw his peril, but he saw his duty too.

The project of killing Coligny was not new to Catherine ; it seems to have been in her mind for several years as an expedient to which she might some day have to resort. So long as she could make use of him directly or indirectly, he was safe, for whatever her private feelings may have been she never allowed them to interfere with her policy, and the disciple of Machiavelli did not resort to violence except as a last expedient. If Coligny had showed himself a little less impracticable, if she could have managed him as she had contrived to manage the Bourbons and the Guises, she would have gone no farther ; she did not definitely resolve on killing him until she had satisfied herself that he could neither be cajoled nor bribed, and that there was nothing else to be done. The practice of assassination had grown very common during the last few years ; the civil wars had not only hardened men's hearts, but demoralised their consciences, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Tavannes.

lust of blood, the claims not only of humanity but of justice and of honour had been habitually set aside. Condé, a prisoner of war, was shot down in cold blood by Anjou's orders, after the battle of Jarnac; Charles, we have seen, had no hesitation in ordering the assassination of Guise in an angry moment; Lignerolles, a favourite of the Duke of Anjou, was stabbed to death at Blois,<sup>1</sup> while the court was there, by seven or eight gentlemen, whose pardon was granted at once; the ambassador of Savoy wrote that a dozen other murders had been committed at the same place, and had all gone unpunished. "Nothing is talked of at this court but assassinations."<sup>2</sup> There was, therefore, nothing singular about Catherine's resolve except the ingenuity with which she made her arrangements. She chose for her collaborators her son Anjou, the Marshal Tavannes, and three of her Italian favourites, Gondi (Duke of Retz), Gonzaga (Duke of Nevers), and Birague, afterwards Cardinal.

It was necessary that Catherine should not appear in the matter, for if the murder should excite the King's wrath—he was still full of affection for Coligny—the consequences to herself and Anjou might be serious; she therefore invited d'Aumale (the Cardinal of Lorraine was still in Rome) to seize the moment

<sup>1</sup> It is not known for certain what Lignerolles's crime was, nor whether his death was demanded by Catherine, Anjou, or the King, but De Thou observes: "Il n'y avoit pas d'apparence qu'un homme comme Lignerolles, le favori et le confidant du duc d'Anjou, eût été assassiné en plein midi par les personnes les plus considérables de la cour, sans un ordre du Roy."—*Hist. Univ.* vol. vi. ch. ix. p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to the amb. of Savoy in La Ferrière, p. 318.



for avenging his brother's death.<sup>1</sup> D'Aumale willingly assented, and Catherine then (probably on the 15th or 16th of August) sent for a man named Maurevel, who had once been a page in the Guise household, and engaged him to execute her wish. He was placed in the charge of d'Aumale's steward, who lodged him in a house adjoining the church of St. Germain, occupied by a canon who had been Guise's tutor, and provided him with two horses from the Duke's stables. The Admiral killed, according to Catherine's well-thought-out scheme, the Guises would of course, be suspected of his murder; every detail that could be discovered would go to prove their guilt; the Huguenots would be wild for revenge, the Montmorencys would espouse their cousin's cause, and though the Guises were very strong in Paris, the tumult would probably not be suppressed until both factions had been weakened considerably.<sup>2</sup> By this means the authority of the crown,—that is to say, Catherine's authority,—would be much increased, and she would be the gainer in more ways than one.

The wedding was on Monday; on the following Friday morning Coligny left the King playing tennis with Guise and two Huguenot gentlemen, and

<sup>1</sup> The narrative attributed to Henry of Valois places Anne d'Este in the place of d'Aumale, but this statement is very improbable. Anne's mother, Renée of Ferrara, with whom she was on excellent terms, was Coligny's dearest friend; Anne had once been half a Huguenot herself, and she had been happily married to her second husband, Nemours, for six years. Nothing in her character or conduct bears out the suggestion.

<sup>2</sup> Tavannes; and *Mém. de l'Etat de France*.

was walking slowly to his lodging in the Rue des Fossés St. Germain,<sup>1</sup> when two shots, fired from the window of the house next the church, struck him, one in the left arm and one on the right hand. The King's game was interrupted by the news; he dashed his racquet to the ground, crying, "Am I then never to be left in peace?" and went into the palace, while Guise disappeared by another door and spent the rest of the day in his own house, fearing arrest if he showed himself. The incident cast a deep gloom over the court, "some mourning the assassin's attempt, and more his failure." Catherine was much disconcerted by Maurevel's bad marksmanship; the King was furious at the outrage which had been committed within a hundred yards of the Louvre; he was swearing to do justice upon the instigator of it; she trembled as she thought that some accident might turn his ungovernable rage upon herself or, worse still, upon Anjou. The general rising of the Huguenots, on which she had counted for the covering of the crime, had not taken place, for Coligny's one prayer to his friends was that they should keep quiet and wait for legal redress, and her advisers were all at their wits' end. She joined heartily, meanwhile, in the King's expressions of indignation, declaring that if the murderer were not discovered the royal family could not sleep securely in their beds, and she made a point of going

<sup>1</sup> It used to be believed that the Admiral lodged in the Rue de Béthisy, but according to M. E. Fournier in *Paris Démoli*, it was in the Rue des Fossés St. Germain l'Auxérois.—Baschet, *La diplomatie Vénitienne*, p. 553, note.

with her three sons that afternoon to pay a visit of condolence to the sufferer. Gondi, Birague, Tavannes, and Nevers accompanied her; they were all very uneasy and they wanted to see for themselves how the matter stood. The wound was rather serious. A finger had been amputated, as mortification was feared, and there was still hope, since the Admiral was not in good health, that they might have accomplished their purpose; they stood about the bed, observing him with anxious eyes, while Catherine assured him of her sympathy, and exhorted him to be of good courage. But one malignant word escaped her in spite of her self-restraint, as she looked at the bullet which had been extracted from the shoulder. "I remember," she said reflectively, "that when the late M. de Guise was assassinated, they could not find the bullet." The King showed Coligny every mark of the tenderest affection. "The wound is yours," he said, "but the pain of it is mine," and he would have had him carried to the Louvre, but the doctors forbade it. Before the King left him, to Catherine's dismay they exchanged a few private words.

Coligny was persuaded that Guise was his assailant, but some instinct had set his friends on the right track; and when the musket which the murderer had left behind him in his flight, was recognised as belonging to one of Anjou's guards, their talk grew louder and more dangerous.<sup>1</sup> They began to declare

<sup>1</sup> "Ils usèrent de paroles par trop insolentes."—Brantôme. "Les Huguenots hautement bravachent et menassent la maison de Guise."—*Rel. V. A.*

that if justice were not done they would do it themselves, and Anjou's name was heard mingled with their threats. Some of them were for carrying the wounded man out of Paris, in spite of the physicians, "For I think," said the Vidame of Chartres, "that what we have seen is but the first act of the tragedy"; and Montmorency wrote from Chantilly that if Coligny would say the word, he would come with five hundred horse and see him safely into La Rochelle. But Coligny would not move. To leave Paris after the assurances given him afresh that afternoon would have been to offer Charles a flagrant insult; he had staked his life upon the King's honour, and he was resolved to abide the issue. He could not guess that it was no longer a question of his own life alone. He consented, however, thinking always of Guise as his avowed enemy, to ask Charles for a guard, and fifty musketeers were posted round his house under de Caussens, and at the same time the King desired the Catholic gentlemen who lodged in the neighbourhood to give up their rooms to the Admiral's followers, that they might be at hand in case of any disturbance, and he invited Navarre, Condé and their suites to sleep in the Louvre.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing had been seen of the Guises since the attack, but on the Saturday morning they presented themselves at the Louvre to request the King's

vol. ii. p. 320. "Quelques autres des chefs des Huguenots en parlèrent si haut à la reyne qu'ils luy firent penser qu'ils avoient quelque mauvaise intention,"—Marg. *Mém.* p. 26.

<sup>1</sup> "Pour se garder des desseins du duc de Guise qu'il disoit estre mauvais garçon."—*Mém. de l'Etat de France.*

permission to leave the city. They said they had perceived that their services were no longer acceptable to his Majesty, their servants had been arrested unjustly, and they themselves had been wickedly slandered. Charles replied coldly that they might go where they pleased; he would know where to find them when he wanted them. They rode out of the Gate of St. Antoine, but they went no farther than the faubourg, being recalled probably by Catherine, who had now formed a new scheme in which she required their co-operation.<sup>1</sup>

During the hours of dreadful perplexity which had passed since she heard of Maurevel's failure, she had come to a desperate conclusion, in which she was confirmed by the report of the physicians, who on Saturday morning pronounced that Coligny would recover. If he recovered his influence would keep his followers quiet till an inquiry was held; and from a formal inquiry she had so much to fear! D'Aumale would certainly not hesitate to tell her share in the affair; Maurevel, if he were caught and put to the question, might do as Poltrot had done; and the Admiral would be at the King's side to sustain him in his hatred of Anjou. She called her advisers together early on Saturday morning,—Gondi the Florentine, Birague the Milanese, Gonzaga the Mantuan, and Tavannes,—in the garden of the Tuileries, then outside the city walls, and with them she and

<sup>1</sup> Historians, as every one knows, are still divided on the question whether the Saint Bartholomew was a crime of impulse or of premeditation. I regret that space allows me only to state briefly my own view.



Anjou arranged a general massacre of the Huguenots, beginning with the Admiral,<sup>1</sup> in which Guise again should be made to figure as the principal agent. The only drawback was that this plot could not be carried out without the King's consent;<sup>2</sup> but since no better way offered, they agreed that somehow it must be obtained. There was no difficulty in persuading Guise to fall in with the plan—he joyously accepted the task committed to him, and assisted in the preliminary arrangements; but it seems to have been late in the afternoon before Catherine found courage to approach her son. She sent Retz to him first,<sup>3</sup> and Retz explained as smoothly as he could that it was an error to suppose that the Duke of Guise had struck the blow at the Admiral; the Queen-mother and Anjou had been partners in the affair, and if the King persisted in an inquiry, he would find himself presently in the greatest danger. When the truth was known, the Huguenots would vent their fury not only on the Queen and Anjou, but on Charles himself, whom some of them already suspected of conniving at the crime. Charles had no time to consider this bewildering disclosure before Catherine entered with Anjou

<sup>1</sup> "La reyne craintive . . . hâte la resolution de tuer l'Amiral et les chefs Huguenots qui murmuroient contre Anjou. . . . L'accident de la blessure au lieu de la mort, les menaces forcent le conseil à la résolution de tuer tous les chefs."—Tavannes.

<sup>2</sup> "Ne fust pour lors prins autre délibération que par quelque moyen que ce fust, despêcher l'amiral. Et ne pouvant plus user de ruses et de finesses, il fallait que ce fust par voye découverte mais qu'il fallait, pour ce faire, amener le roy à ceste résolution."—*Discours du Roy Henri III.*

<sup>3</sup> According to Margaret: the narrative attributed to Anjou (*Discours du Roy Henri III. à un personnage d'honneur et de qualité, etc.* Petitot, series i. vol. xliv.) omits any reference to this.

and the rest, armed with those deadly powers of persuasion which her son knew so well. She reminded him of the loss and humiliation he had suffered from the Huguenots, of the day when he had fled from Meaux before Coligny's cavalry, of the weeks during which he had vainly besieged his own town of Saint Jean d'Angély, of the threats so lately uttered, of the ease with which they might be carried out by a body of men so determined and so unscrupulous. Charles, exhausted by the excitement of the week, and unstrung by want of sleep, was miserably affected by the unfeigned terror in his mother's voice and eyes ; but shaking with mingled fear and anger, he still declared that no one should harm Coligny. "They shall not touch M. de Châtillon," he repeated ; "he is my one friend." "The Queen, my mother, never felt so baffled," says Margaret, "as when she tried to make the King understand that what had been done was for the good of his State, . . . because of the love he bore to the Lord Admiral, and to La Noue and Teligny." Catherine reasoned and implored for an hour before she succeeded in working her unhappy son into the fit of frenzy which swept away as with a flood, all honour, all compassion, all care for the great name he bore. "We then perceived in him a sudden mutation, a marvellous and strange metamorphosis ; rising and imposing silence upon us, he swore by God's death, that since we would have the Admiral killed, he gave his consent, on condition that every other Huguenot in France was put to death as well, so that not one should be left to

reproach him afterwards ; and he bade us make haste.”<sup>1</sup>

Late in the evening Charron, the provost of the merchants, was summoned<sup>2</sup> to the Louvre and told that a Huguenot conspiracy had been discovered, and that in order to frustrate it, the city bands were to assemble at midnight before the Town Hall, when they would receive further orders ; the gates were to be locked and guarded, and the boats on the river chained to the bank that no one might cross. The Swiss guards were drawn up in the courtyard of the Louvre, and the bell of St. Germain was to give the signal to begin ; a list of the Huguenots then in the town and the houses they lodged in, had been prepared beforehand. It may be observed here that so far from the massacre being inspired, as has sometimes been asserted, by religious animosity, there was no attempt even to cloak the crime with any religious pretext ; the Huguenots were accused of meditating a purely political offence, they were massacred not as heretics but as rebels. When the Church of Rome adopted and sanctioned the crime for which she was only indirectly responsible, she committed as great a blunder as any in her history.

On the 24th of August the sun rises at five o'clock, and it is light an hour earlier. It was about four o'clock, in the grey of the dawn,<sup>3</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> *Discours du roy Henri III.* Cf. Margaret : “A ce que je luy ai depuis ouï dire à luy mesme (the King) . . . sans ce qu'on luy fit entendre qu'il y alloit de sa vie et de son estat, il ne l'eust jamais fait.”—*Mém.* p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Extraits des Registres du Bureau de la Ville de Paris, *Arch. Cur.* vol vii. p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> “In sul far dell' alba.”—Michiel.

Guise, d'Aumale, and Angoulême rode down the street and halted at the Admiral's door. Caussens, the captain of the guard, met them and spoke with them softly, and he then knocked at the door and asked in the King's name to speak to the Admiral. The servant who opened to them was immediately stabbed, two or three Swiss who tried to defend the staircase were shot down, and the noise awakened Coligny and the four or five persons who were sleeping in his room. "Monseigneur," said Paré the surgeon, "they have broken into the house; we have no means of resisting them." "I have long been prepared to die," the Admiral answered, "but you must save yourselves if you can; you can do nothing for me, and I have the presence of God." He rose and wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, while his friends escaped through a window on to the roof; only his German interpreter, Nicholas Muss, refused to obey his master's last command, and stayed to die with him. Even then Coligny thought the Guises were his only enemies; it was not till Caussens himself entered the room with Sarlabous, Attin, and a Bohemian in Guise's service that he knew his King had betrayed him.

"Are you the Admiral?" asked the Bohemian.

"I am," answered Coligny; and he added tranquilly, "You ought, young man, to respect my grey hair and my infirmity; but do your will—my life will not be much the shorter for it."

The murderers hesitated for a moment; and one

of them averred afterwards that he had never seen any man confront death with a countenance so serene. Then the Bohemian thrust him through with his pike, and the others joined in, stabbing and striking, till from the courtyard below Guise called impatiently, "Besme, have you done?"

"It is done," the Bohemian answered.

"Throw him down, then," said Guise. "M. d'Angoulême will not believe unless he sees."

They threw the body out of the window; there was life in it still, for as it fell one hand caught at the window bar. Angoulême dismounted, wiped the blood from the disfigured face, looked at it to be sure of its identity, kicked aside the corpse,<sup>1</sup> and rode away with his friends.

Charles, Catherine, and Anjou stood together meanwhile looking tremulously down into the dark courtyard of the Louvre, waiting in nervous suspense for the signal, when the stillness was broken by the crack of a musket shot, the same perhaps that had awakened the Admiral. The sharp report shattered what little self-control remained to them, and seized by a sudden, horrible panic, they sent a messenger in frantic haste to Guise to countermand all his instructions,—he was to undertake nothing against the Admiral, he was to go to his own house, and to stay there.<sup>2</sup> But it was too late; Guise had been too rapid, too sure. He sent back word that Coligny was dead, and there was nothing for it

<sup>1</sup> Some writers attribute this brutality to Guise.

<sup>2</sup> *Discours du roy Henri III.*



but to go on ; and upon that the summons to the massacre clanged from the tower of St. Germain, and was echoed a little later from the Palais de Justice.<sup>1</sup>

The Sunday morning had dawned very calm and fair, as though the skies were smiling, said Charles, on the destruction of the Huguenots ; and being a holiday, all classes were at leisure to join the troops, who slaughtered and plundered in the King's name all the long summer day. For nearly ten years Catholic Paris had been hoping for some such chance as this,<sup>2</sup> and they made the most of it. Drowsy and bewildered, taken completely by surprise, the Huguenots offered little resistance ; here and there a man fell fighting, here and there a house was held for an hour or two against the mob, but with very few exceptions the task was an easy one. The unrivalled opportunity of paying off old scores and of securing coveted advantages was readily seized ; a wife disclosed her husband's hiding-place, a daughter denounced her mother, a girl led the murderers to the house of her former lover ; many were killed by eager candidates for the office which death would leave vacant, by next of kin impatient to inherit, or by their opponents in a lawsuit whose issue might otherwise have been uncertain. A large number of Catholics were among the victims, as were also three Englishmen who had failed to gain the shelter of the

<sup>1</sup> "C'était au point du jour."—*Mém. de l'Etat de France*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Smith's Journal, 3rd June 1563. "The Papists of Paris say that they still look to have a day to cut the throats of all the Huguenots."—*Cal. of State Papers, Foreign*.

Embassy.<sup>1</sup> "It was enough to cry of any one, He is a Huguenot, and he was murdered at once."<sup>2</sup> The spoils were immense; Brantôme says that some of his friends made ten thousand crowns. "Many a man will eat off plate to-night who never dreamed of such a thing before," wrote the nuncio Salviati at midday.

Within the Louvre the slaughter was as pitiless as that which reddened the streets without. The Huguenot gentlemen of Navarre's suite had been wakeful, and some thirty or forty of them had sat up all night in his dressing-room playing cards and talking of the Admiral's accident. Very late on the Saturday evening the Captain of the Guard had lifted the tapestry which closed the dressing-room and put his head in. "Gentlemen," said he, "do any of you want to leave? They are going to shut the gates;" but no one moved. "I noticed," said one who was present,<sup>3</sup> "that he looked at them hard and counted

<sup>1</sup> "Then I made (the King) understand that three of our nation were slain and that divers were spoiled, for the which he shewed himself to be very sorry, and said that if the parties offenders could be produced there should be exemplary justice used. I shewed his Majestie it would be hard to produce them, the disorder being so general, the sword being committed to the common people."—Wals. to Smith, 2nd Sept.; Digges, p. 239. "One of them was Lord Wharton's tutor. We hear say that he that was sent by my Lord Chamberlain to be Schoolmaster to young Wharton, being come the day before, was then slain. Alas, he was acquainted with nobody, nor could be partaker of any evil dealing. How fearful and careful the mothers and parents be here of such young gentlemen as be there you may easily guess by my Lady Jane, who prayeth very earnestly that her son may be sent home with as much speed as may be."—Smith to Walsingham, 12th Sept.; *Ibid.* p. 252. "The Duke of Nevers . . . did very honourably entertain three English gentlemen who otherwise 'had been in great jeopardy of their lives.'"—*Ibid.* p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> Michiel.

<sup>3</sup> J. de Mergey, *Mém. Petitot*, p. 67.

them carefully." At daybreak Navarre got up, and said he would go and play tennis till the King was awake, when he meant to demand justice for the attack on Coligny ;<sup>1</sup> he was arrested at the foot of the staircase and his companions were seized and disarmed. Four or five of them, who were known to be lukewarm partisans, were spared ; the rest were stabbed in the palace or driven into the courtyard to be butchered by the Swiss Guards under the eyes of their royal host. One of them, Armand de Piles, the brave defender of St. Jean d'Angely, looked up and saw that haggard young face at the window. "And this," he cried, "is the faith of a King!" Charles heard but he made no sign. He had tried to save the Count de la Rochefoucauld, who was one of his favourite companions, and as the Huguenot was leaving the King's room, last of all, as usual, late on Saturday evening, Henry called him back. "Don't go, 'Foucauld," he said coaxingly. "It's late already ; we may as well amuse ourselves for the rest of the night ;" but la Rochefoucauld answered carelessly that he wanted to go to bed and to sleep. "You can sleep here," the King urged, but the other persisted. "Good night, little master," he said, and Charles, afraid of awaking suspicion, let his friend go blithely to his death.<sup>2</sup>

In the general massacre Guise took little part. No sooner had he satisfied that deep cold passion of hatred which had coiled half hidden in his heart for years, than he turned his attention to the Faubourg

<sup>1</sup> Marg. *Mém.*

<sup>2</sup> Jean de Mergey, *Mém.*

St. Germain, where Montgomery, one of the most redoubtable men of his party, was quartered. The company which had been told off to attack the faubourg had not obeyed orders; they had dispersed to pillage and could not be got together again, and the keys of the nearest gate had been mislaid. The Huguenots on the farther bank, roused by the uproar, imagined that the Guises were attacking either the Admiral or the Louvre, and they hurried down to the river's edge, "that they might at least die with the King." There were no boats and they were unable to cross; it was daybreak before discovering their mistake, they mounted and rode for their lives with Guise at their heels. At Montfort l'Amaury, over twenty miles from Paris, he relinquished the pursuit, and by that time it was evening and orders had been given, though quite ineffectually, to stop the massacre.

From the moment of his return he occupied himself in saving life rather than in taking it. To Catherine's intense annoyance a considerable number—over a hundred, it is said—of Huguenots found refuge in the Hôtel de Guise, and she even suspected him of permitting Montgomery and his friends to escape.<sup>1</sup> This unlooked-for humanity is attributed by some to a wish to place the Huguenots under

<sup>1</sup> *Reveil-matin des Français*. Cf. the English report: "The Duke of Guise himself is not so bloody, neither did he kill any man himself, but saved divers." *Record Office, State Papers, Foreign*, vol. cxliv. p. 584. A friend of Duplessis Mornay offered to procure a passport for him from the Duke, but Duplessis refused it, "not wishing to owe his life to any person for whom his conscience forbade him to employ it."—*Mém. et Corresp.*

an obligation ; others imagine that he did not wish to see them exterminated, as there would then be no excuse for renewing the civil war. If he had a secondary motive, it was probably that he intended to dissociate himself, once his private quarrel with the Admiral was settled, from an affair which he perceived already must sooner or later be condemned, by many as a crime, by more as a blunder. But there is no need to insist upon a secondary motive at all ; Henry of Guise was naturally as kindly as his father, and in a cruel age no act of cold-blooded cruelty is proved against him either before or after the St. Bartholomew.<sup>1</sup> In any case, the fact remains that when every way of escape was closed to the Huguenots the doors of Guise's house stood open to them.

Catherine had intended Guise to quit the capital immediately after the massacre, leaving her to tell her own story. On the Saturday the King had written to inform the foreign courts and his provincial governors that the Admiral's injury of the previous day resulted from his feud with the Guises. On Sunday, while Guise was absent, he wrote that the attack on the Huguenots was the work of the same hand. On his return, however, Guise flatly refused <sup>2</sup> to meet Catherine's wishes, declining either to leave the capital or to shield the King in any way from the consequences of his action. He had

<sup>1</sup> Except the devastation of Montbéliard, for which there was a political motive.

<sup>2</sup> Tavannes. De Thou says Catherine wished Charles to have the credit of the massacre, but I think Tavannes is a better authority here.



no wish, he said, to be set up as a mark for every heretic in Christendom, and if the sovereign was afraid to own the deed, how much more cause was there for a mere subject to fear. This unusual timidity could not be overcome, and Catherine and her sons were thus "constrained," Tavannes says drily, "to invent a third lie." The discovery was published of a plot formed by the Huguenots to attack the Louvre, to murder the royal family, including the King of Navarre, and to make Condé King. "Whereupon" (to quote the story the French ambassador in England told Burleigh) "the King was so daunted with the present fear of his own person, and his mother and his brethren, and with the imminent danger of the new civil war, as being thus overcome with this extremity, and having no time long to deliberate thereupon, scarce the space of an hour, he was in this manner forced to yield to another extremity; which was to suffer the parties that were enemies to the Admiral to proceed to the execution of them . . . for his defence against the perils that were propounded to him by the Informations."<sup>1</sup> Charles went on Tuesday in state to the Parliament to relate the story of the conspiracy, which no one believed.<sup>2</sup> It was noticed that he looked

<sup>1</sup> Digges, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> "La reyne m'a bien annoncé que l'on avoit découvert une grande conspiration . . . je say bien ce que j'en ay creu."—Monluc, *Comment.* Cf. La Ferrière's letter from Rome to Catherine, in *Le XVI<sup>me</sup> Siècle et les Valois*. Michiel the Venetian was equally clear: "Your Serenity may know that all this affair, from beginning to end, has been the work of the Queen, arranged, undertaken, and directed by her, her only partner being the Duke of Anjou." It was, he says, "la sua vendetta."—Alberi, *Rel. V. A.* ser. i. vol. iv.

fearfully changed, yellow and bent, with a nervous tremor of his lips and downcast eyes; Catherine, on the contrary, had emerged from her blood-bath looking, the Savoyard says, ten years younger.<sup>1</sup>

Coligny's house had been plundered, but his papers had been taken to the palace by Catherine's express orders, and they were eagerly searched for evidence that might be produced in support of the King's statement,—evidence for which the courts of Europe were all inquiring. But there was nothing that answered the purpose. In a conversation with Walsingham, the English ambassador, Catherine "took occasion to inveigh vehemently against the Admiral, saying . . . 'To the end you may see how little your Mistris was beholding to him, you may see (saith she) a discourse found with his Testament, made at such time as he was sick at Rochel, wherein amongst other advices that he gave the King my son, this is one that he willed him in any case, to keep the Queen your Mistris and the King of Spain as low as he could, as a thing that tended much to the safety and maintenance of this Crown.' To that I answered," says Walsingham, "that in this point, however he was affected towards the Queen my Mistris, he showed himself a most true and faithful servant to the Crown of France."<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to arrive at any exact estimate of the number of lives lost in the massacres, for contemporary records place it anywhere between one thousand

<sup>1</sup> D'Elbène to the Duke of Savoy, in *Le XVI<sup>me</sup> Siècle et les Valois*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Digges, p. 241.

and ten thousand in Paris, and between ten thousand and one hundred thousand in the provinces ; it could hardly have been less than three thousand in Paris, and De Thou's calculation of twenty thousand in the provinces is probably not much beyond the mark.<sup>1</sup> They were hardly over when Charles, now nervously anxious to convince Protestant Europe that in slaughtering so many of his own subjects he had submitted to a purely political necessity, issued a proclamation in which he assured the Huguenots of his goodwill and protection ; he was still resolved, he said, to maintain his last edict, but for the present, to avoid disturbances, he withdrew from them the right of public worship.<sup>2</sup> A little later the provincial governors were instructed to send for the "gentlemen of the new opinion, to tell them that it was the royal will and intention to protect them, to engage them to fidelity and obedience, and to admonish them amiably not to persevere longer in error. . . ." Guise had continued, on his return to his government of Champagne, to show himself in the unaccustomed light of the Huguenots' protector ; he exerted himself greatly to restrain the popular fury, and except at Troyes few outrages were committed. He now proceeded, according to the King's directions, to see what could be done "to persuade the nobles of his province to return frankly and of their own free will to the Catholic religion." He set out, in

<sup>1</sup> The number of Protestants who suffered death in England during the five years of Mary Tudor's reign is estimated at less than three hundred.

<sup>2</sup> De Thou. In spite of this, Walsingham reported "the most extreme severity towards those of the Religion."—Digges, p. 253.

November, on a sort of missionary tour to his larger towns, but his pious labours met with little success ; most of the Huguenot nobles were already across the frontier, and only seven presented themselves at Meaux, two at Troyes, and six at Sens ; at Joinville he waited two whole days and was only rewarded by a couple of converts.<sup>1</sup> Mayenne returned from the East towards the end of the year, and in February the two brothers went down together to the siege of La Rochelle.

### III

It seemed for a moment as though the Huguenot party had perished in the St. Bartholomew. The only men of note who had survived the massacre were Montgomery, who had escaped to England ; La Noue, shut up with Count Louis of Nassau in Mons ; and Montbrun, in hiding in the South. Nor was it only death that had thinned the ranks of the Reformed ; hundreds had gone into exile, leaving all they possessed behind them, and hundreds more, like Navarre and Condé, their chiefs, had renounced the faith and were thronging the Roman Catholic churches. "Every one in France goes to church now," Morillon tells Granvelle ; "it is a great conversion in a very short time."<sup>2</sup> Without leaders, without money, without influence, deserted as it seemed, alas ! to some, by God as well as by man, what but submission remained ? There was an instant when La Noue himself despaired.

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé, vol. ii, p. 525.

<sup>2</sup> Granvelle, *Corresp.* vol. iv, p. 443.

But one of the murderers, looking upon the stripped and mutilated corpses that choked the Seine, had been heard to say moodily, "I think we shall see these dead men rise again." And to those who watched the breath of life begin again to stir the numbed, crushed limbs of the Reformed church, it was indeed as though they beheld a miracle of resurrection. Nîmes and some smaller places in Languedoc took courage and shut their gates upon d'Amville, their governor; Sancerre in Berri did the same; and Montbrun was soon heard of here and there in Dauphiné, "destitute of means and able to promise his followers only wounds, honour, and the solace of death.<sup>1</sup>" No inland town, however, could offer a prolonged resistance to the royal troops; it was on the city by the sea that all eyes were fixed, it was upon the decision of La Rochelle that the country hung waiting. Biron, who had taken no part in the massacre, and had indeed, Catholic though he was, narrowly escaped with his life, was sent in haste to explain away the incident and to invite the Rochelais to admit him as their governor. The Rochelais hesitated; Biron became more urgent, and courier on courier came down from Paris with letters from the King and the Queen, from Anjou and Navarre, full of "fair and courteous words," promising to respect the privileges of the Huguenot stronghold. La Rochelle listened, and wavered, and decided at last to stand by her weaker comrades; single-handed, with France against her, she undertook the defence of the Cause. The siege opened in November, and by

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*



February all the princes were bivouacking under the white walls—Anjou and Alençon, Nevers and the Guises, with Navarre and Condé, Catherine's new converts, whom she was delighted to exhibit in this light to their Huguenot friends. Fortunately for La Rochelle, there was no Richelieu among them and the camp was distracted by the usual jealousies; Alençon was intriguing with Navarre and Turenne against his elder brother Anjou; Guise fell out with Nevers, who complained that his brother-in-law had "never thanked him properly for his services in the matter of the wounding of the late Admiral"; Anjou, the commander-in-chief, was elected to the Polish throne in May, and the King was eager to get him out of the kingdom. After a fruitless struggle of over eight months and a loss to the royalists of some twenty thousand men, including d'Aumale, the siege was raised. The Rochelais, to save Anjou's feelings, agreed to apologise for their behaviour and to give Biron a fine entry into the town; but in return, the right of holding religious assemblies was conceded to La Rochelle, Nîmes, Montauban, and to those nobles who had the rights of High Justice; liberty of conscience was restored to the whole country; admission to schools and hospitals was granted to Huguenots; and a general amnesty was proclaimed.

In November Anjou left France for his northern kingdom; it was proposed that Guise should be one of the nobles who were to escort him to Poland but Catherine objected, on the ground that Guise was always

desirous of setting the world astir,<sup>1</sup> and Mayenne, who was of a more peaceful disposition, went instead.

Guise could not hope for any advancement while Charles lived, the King's mistrust of him was too deep; but since the throne must evidently soon be vacant, this was of the less consequence, and instead of wasting time in conciliating a dying man, Guise espoused the party of the absent Anjou against his younger brother, Alençon, who had some hope of snatching the crown of France from the King of Poland. The Montmorencys had joined Alençon, and there were perpetual quarrels between the two factions. A gentleman called Ventabren, for instance, had left Guise's service for that of Alençon, and Guise had forbidden him ever to come into his presence again; but one day as the Duke was entering the Louvre he met Ventabren on the grand staircase.<sup>2</sup> Ventabren ventured to address him, and Guise without more ado, drew his sword; the other fled up the stairs and tripped on the top step, when Guise ran him through and left him for dead on the landing. Then walking into the King's room, "Sire," said he, "I have killed Ventabren; I come to ask your pardon."

"What?" cried Charles, "In my palace?"

"You have no right, my Lord Duke, to draw your sword in the Louvre," said La Mole, Alençon's favourite.

<sup>1</sup> Lettres de Catherine de' Medici; to Anjou, 30th May '73: "J'ay dist que n'aviez afaire de personnes que le peys pensat qu'il voleuset remuer le monde."

<sup>2</sup> The versions of this anecdote vary slightly.

“Had you been in his place, I should have done just the same,” returned Guise.

“Who attacks my servants, attacks me,” said Alençon sharply.

At this point Catherine interposed, and undertook to inquire into the matter, and the consequence was that Guise, in his new character of Anjou's friend, was troubled no further, while Ventabren, who was not dead after all, was imprisoned on a charge of conspiracy.<sup>1</sup> Scenes such as these sadly fretted the King's last months, but when at last he would fain have been his own master, he was impotent to break the yoke alone, and he knew himself altogether friendless, now that Coligny was gone. Since the St. Bartholomew he had grown more moody and savage; he hunted more madly than ever, and exhausted himself in working at his forge, in a vain effort to escape the dreadful memories which haunted him night and day; in his calmer hours he interested himself in his little “Academy of Art and Letters,” and in writing his book on the chase, with its quaint dedication to his huntsman Mesnil.<sup>2</sup> He still talked of the glory he might win in battle, and hoped fondly that after all he might not die in his bed; but the little book was not quite finished when he asked that his couch might be set round with green boughs from the May forest; and with the breath of the woodland filling his dim chamber,

<sup>1</sup> Dale says, “He shall be charged that he did attempt to draw his sword in the Court when Guise did hurt him, which in Guise is thought a small fault.” *State Papers, Foreign*, cxliv. p. 1322.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Livre du Roy Charles*: Paris, 1859. Ed. by M. Henri Chevreul.

the most pitiful victim of the St. Bartholomew passed away (30th May 1574). He said he was glad he left no son to succeed him, for he knew by experience how sorrowful was the lot of a child-king, and France needed a man.<sup>1</sup>

The Cardinal of Lorraine only outlived Charles a few months, dying upon a December night, so stormy that in the memory of man there had been no such tempest, when the Huguenots believed that something wilder than the wind had torn off the casement fastenings and whirled away that guilty soul. Catherine had come to consider him the only really dangerous member of his family. The Duke of Guise had lived so quietly for some months and had shown so little inclination to interfere with her government, that she watched Alençon and Navarre and took no heed at all of the other Henry, who appeared even to Cuniga, the careful Spaniard, to have neither liking nor capacity for affairs.<sup>2</sup> While the Cardinal lived, Catherine had refused to listen to Anjou's wish to marry a Lorraine princess, Louise de Vaudemont;<sup>3</sup> but though she still did not like the marriage, when her son (now Henry III.) brought forward the project again on the Cardinal's death, she admitted that there was no longer the same reason for opposing it,<sup>4</sup> no longer any fear of repeating the history of that other daughter of Lorraine whose brief occupancy of

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. vii. p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Bouillé, *Papiers de Simancas*, vol. iii. p. 5; letter of Diego di Cuniga.

<sup>3</sup> Daughter of Nicolas, Count of Vaudemont, younger brother of Duke Charles of Lorraine, by his first wife, Margaret of Egmont.

<sup>4</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 243; and De Thou, vol. vii.

the French throne she remembered very well. The Cardinal of Guise, who crowned Henry on the 20th of February, 1575, married him to Louise de Vaudemont two days later.

Henry of Valois had left France with a reputation for talent and courage which had perhaps been easily earned by the heir to the crown; he returned after an absence of less than eighteen months altered almost beyond recognition. The restless wish to be first which had alarmed his brother, the activity which had spurred him to incessant intrigues, had given place to an extraordinary apathy in all that regarded the serious conduct of life. He abandoned the ruling of his kingdom to Catherine, the ruling of his court to his favourites, contenting himself with the most trivial pursuits; interrupting the study of his toilette and his eager quest of tiny dogs,<sup>1</sup> only to indulge in those grotesque displays of devotion which were too clearly the offspring of a disorderly life and of a diseased conscience to be impressive or convincing. In the plotting and counterplotting which filled the first years of Henry's reign, Guise took little open part. He was attentive to the young Queen, though from the first it was plain she was no Mary Stuart, and extremely intimate with Navarre, who, during his years of semi-captivity, accepted with his unfailing good humour the rather

<sup>1</sup> "Laisse ses chemises à grands goldrons . . . et en prend à colet renversé, à l'italienne; va en coche . . . par tous les monastères des femmes . . . faire quête de petits chiens au grand regret et déplaisir des dames auxquelles les chiens appartiennent: se fait lire le grammaire et apprend à décliner."—L'Estoile, vol. i. p. 93.



contemptuous patronage of the Lorraine princes.<sup>1</sup> The King was in bad health, and it was thought he could not live long; Alençon, the heir-apparent, was as sickly as his brother, and Navarre came next; it was, therefore, worth while to keep on good terms with him, and it was so easy to be on good terms with the Béarnais! Amid the discords which rent the royal family, while the King was hopelessly at variance with his brother and his sister, and even Catherine's skilful management could not keep the peace,—“it is as very hell among them,” says Dale,<sup>1</sup> “not one content or in quiet with another,”<sup>2</sup>—Guise occupied himself in privately strengthening his own position, by gaining adherents by every means and from all classes, “hoping,” says Margaret, “that when the vessel was broken he might pick up the bits.” He had the greatest contempt for the Parisian populace—there never was a less democratic mind; but he saw what might be done with those emotional masses, and he resolved, if ever he required them, to have them under his hand. Guest at every one's table, sponsor to every one's child, attentive to all petitions, he was soon said to be the greatest usurer in the kingdom, because every man was his debtor. “To gain men, he would have achieved the impossible.” During his frequent absences from court, his wife acted as his confidential agent, and they corresponded incessantly, often in

<sup>1</sup> Dale to Walsingham, March 1575; *State Papers, France*, cxlv. p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> “The King of Navarre uses great familiarity with the Guises, but they make little account of him.”—Dale to Burleigh; *State Papers, France*, cxlv. p. 450.

cipher; his letters to "his lovely advocate" were full of minute directions. "I am glad," he wrote, "that you spoke to Madame de Noirmoutier, if she liked she could tell you a good many important things. Be attentive to Madame de Saint Luc, for she lives on compliments. Say something nice to Guepeau, in return for what he told you about M. de Joyeuse."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of Charles's reign, on the ruins of the old Huguenot organisation, and side by side with the new, there had risen a Third Party, led by Damville, the ablest of the four Montmorencys.<sup>2</sup> It consisted of the moderate men of both creeds, and it demanded a reformed system of government, including religious toleration as a political necessity. A powerful coalition was formed in the summer of 1574 between the Huguenots and the Politics or Malcontents, as the Third Party was called; "and now," says Michiel, "very little is said of religion, which plays but a secondary part. . . . The conflict is no longer in the name of religion, but in the name of the public good, as in the time of Louis XI."<sup>3</sup> The Malcontents were joined by Alençon, on his escape from Paris in September 1575, and war was declared. The news that Thoré (Guillaume de Montmorency), who had been raising troops in Germany, was crossing the frontier with two thousand reiters and five hundred French

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé, vol. iii. p. 3, MSS. Gagnières.

<sup>2</sup> François, Duke of Montmorency, Henri de Damville, Charles de Méru, Guillaume de Thoré, the four sons of the Constable Anne de Montmorency.

<sup>3</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 227.

musketeers, gave the governor of Champagne his chance. He was hastily despatched to intercept the Germans, whom he defeated at Dormans, near Chateau-Thierry (10th October, 1575). It was not a very remarkable victory, for Guise's force was six to one, and Thoré after all took nearly half his men safely down to Poitou; but it answered the purpose as well as could be desired. A severe wound in the face gave Guise the right to his father's glorious soubriquet, *le Balafré*; Paris, which Thoré had of course never dreamed of attacking, hailed him as her saviour; and when after six weeks on a sickbed he showed himself again in the streets of the capital, pale and smiling, with the long scar on his cheek, he was greeted with boundless enthusiasm. The Bourbons were heretics, the Montmorencys were the heretics' allies, Guise stood alone the heaven-sent champion of the faith. It was murmured by those who did not trust the Lorrainer that the Duke's wound was like to cost France very dear indeed.<sup>1</sup>

Guise was naturally desirous of continuing the war, but Catherine, alarmed by the Duke's popularity, hastened to offer the insurgents peace on their own terms,<sup>2</sup> and the treaty of Beaulieu was signed, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the Guises, on the 5th of May. Eight cities of security were allotted to the Huguenots, with a mixed chamber in every parliament, free exercise of their

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile, vol. i. p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> "Those of the Religion . . . have gotten more without any stroke stricken, than ever could be had before this time by all the wars."—Dale to Burleigh; *State Papers, France*, cxlv. p. 777.

religion everywhere except where the Lord of the Manor objected, permission to teach, to administer sacraments and to hold synods provided a government official was present, equal admission with the Catholics to all offices and dignities; and the rehabilitation of Coligny, Montgomery, and Montbrun. The leaders of the rebellion were not less generously treated than the rank and file. Alençon received as an appanage the three rich provinces of Anjou, Touraine, and Berri, with the title of Duke of Anjou (by which he must henceforth be known), and a pension of one hundred thousand crowns; the government of Picardy, with Péronne as a residence, was given to Condé; of Guienne, to Navarre; of Languedoc, to Damville. Even John Casimir, son of the Elector Palatine, the leader of a large force of German auxiliaries, was not forgotten; he received the principality of Château-Thierry, and was promised the costs of his invasion. The King pledged himself also to call the Estates together within six months. "It was much to be noted that the King caused the Duke of Guise, the Duke of Mayenne, and the Duke of Aumale to be at the publication and to swear unto it, though it was very coldly done. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

As Catherine had not the slightest intention of carrying into effect any of these articles, except the one relating to Alençon, she did not think that it mattered how much she granted;<sup>2</sup> she had gained

<sup>1</sup> Dale to Burleigh; *State Papers, France*, cxlv. p. 783.

<sup>2</sup> "Le faisant la reyne ma mère seulement pour avoir la paix, renvoyer les reistres et retirer mon frère d'avec eux."—*Mém. de Marguerite de Valois*, pp. 77, 78.

her chief object, the detachment of her youngest son from the party, and when her concessions came to be closely examined, they were less valuable than they seemed. Picardy, she knew, would not receive Condé as governor; Damville would govern Languedoc equally well with the King's leave or without it; and the vast sums promised to the Prince Palatine could not be produced by any sleight of hand from the empty treasury. She had set Louis XI. and his dealing with the League of the Public Good before her son as his best model, and to her short-sighted eyes it seemed that they had achieved a fair copy. But, as Dale observed to Burleigh, "there is not a Louis XI. alive that was his craftsman, who spent not his time devising with dames and riding about the town to buy primers."<sup>1</sup> And she had altogether omitted to calculate the moral effect produced upon the country by this revelation of cowardice. The negotiators of the peace on their return to Paris were greeted by a cry of popular indignation; the clergy of Notre-Dame refused to sing the customary *Te Deum*, the heralds were hissed, and the bonfire in front of the Town Hall blazed in an empty square. But graver results than these were to follow. In the Peace of Beaulieu the Catholics read a confession either of guilty indifference or of shameful impotence on the part of the government; outraged by the surrender of the position which since the St. Bartholomew they had thought secure, they determined to set aside the King who had renounced the

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, France*, cxlv. p. 422.



privilege of defending the faith of his fathers, and to enrol themselves under another leader.

The fine organisation of the Huguenot party had long since inspired their opponents with a wish to emulate it, and between the first and second civil wars more than one League of Catholic Defence had been formed, but these had been only local and temporary ; a new union was now set on foot, upon a wider basis and with more serious aims. It was natural that Paris<sup>1</sup> should take the lead in this solemn enterprise, and natural too that it should originate in that bourgeois class which, since the days of Etienne Marcel, had been accustomed to defend its own interests, without distinction of persons. A perfumer, Pierre de la Bruyère, and his son were the first organisers of the new society ; and it was at once reinforced by the general repugnance of Picardy to accept Condé as governor. The Seigneur d'Humières, commandant of Péronne, refused point-blank to surrender the place to the prince, in accordance with the article in the Treaty of Beaulieu which assigned that town to him, and the suggestion of organised resistance was eagerly welcomed. An Act of Union was drawn up and signed by almost every inhabitant in Péronne, passing thence, in a revised form, to the other provinces.

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. viii. bk. lxiii. Other writers say the League originated in Picardy. L'Estoile, for instance : "En ce temps plusieurs gentilhommes se jettent dans la ville de Péronne . . . et court un bruit qu'il y a secrete intelligence et ligue sourde entre le roy d'Hespagne, le pape et quelques seigneurs français contre les Huguenots et les Catholiques unis avec eux."—June 1576, vol. ii. p. 134.

The Act of Union stated that the association was formed to restore and maintain the Roman Catholic religion ; to preserve Henry III. and his Very Christian successors, in the state, authority, and obedience due to them from their subjects, as should be set forth in the articles to be presented at the next meeting of the Estates-General ; and to restore to the country its ancient rights and liberties such as they were in the days of Clovis, the first Christian king. The secret articles of the association followed. Each member vowed to sacrifice goods and life to the advancement of the Union, and to oppose any contrary enterprise from whomsoever it might proceed ; the wrong done to any member was to be avenged, if necessary, by force, no matter who the offender might be ; a chief was to be chosen to whom all must swear obedience, and to him alone the right of awarding penalties was committed ; all Catholics were to be summoned secretly to join the Union, and those who refused were to be accounted its enemies and to be molested in every possible way ; and should any member attempt to leave the Union on whatever pretext, he was to be punished with the extremest rigour, as an enemy of God and a disturber of the public peace. The document was addressed in the first instance to the Catholic princes, noblemen, and seigneurs.

It has been said that the organisation of the Protestant churches suggested that of the League, but a glance at these articles will show how widely the Holy Union departed from its model.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> See Michelet, *Hist. of France*, vol. xii. p. 77.

Huguenot confederation was intensely democratic in character—one of the causes perhaps of its failure to conquer a country in which the monarchical principle was so deeply rooted ; the League was a despotism of the most pronounced type. The Huguenot confederation was organised mainly for defence, the League for attack ; and it refused to recognise even a benevolent neutrality, declaring emphatically that those who were not for them were against them.

The new society spread rapidly, owing in great measure to the diligence of the Jesuits, who worked for it heart and soul, and before long was brought of course to the King's notice ; but it does not seem to have aroused in Henry any feeling except a vague annoyance. On the 2nd of August, "having heard of a secret league and confederation privately set on foot to prevent by all means the execution of the Edict of Pacification," he sent for the Dukes of Guise, Mayenne, and Nemours, "being informed that these three seigneurs were suspected of being the chiefs of this league," and desired them "to sign and swear the entire observation of the edict."<sup>1</sup> But beyond this he troubled himself very little about the great lever which was powerful enough to move a throne. A month later, "the King was riding at the ring, in the costume of an Amazon, and arranging balls and novel amusements for every day, as though his State had been the most peaceable in the world." Catherine took it more to heart. In July, 1576, there was "a great brawl between the Queen-mother and Guise.

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile, vol. ii. p. 150.

The Duke was talking alone in the King's outer chamber with a gentleman of Picardy, almost two hours," when Catherine "came out herself and asked them whereof they talked so long, charging the Duke that he would never leave to trouble the peace of the realm, and called him into the King's cabinet, and there began afresh. . . . The Duke was very malapert with her, and said he was able to hold up his head against all men, and that he had never done anything save for the King's service."<sup>1</sup> Shortly before the meeting of the Estates in December an incident occurred which gave even the King subject for thought. A Parisian advocate called David died on his way back from Rome, where he had gone on a mission for Guise, and soon afterwards a document was produced which was said to have been found among his papers. It was a detailed scheme for the overthrow of the Valois dynasty in favour of the cadets of Lorraine, who were now declared to be the lineal descendants of Charlemagne; the representative of the "reprobate race" of Hugh Capet the interloper was to be shut up in a monastery, and the nation to be brought back to religious unity by the extermination of the Huguenots. Guise denied all knowledge of David's memorial, and the King accepted his assurance, which was probably correct, appearing to share the general belief that the document was a Huguenot fabrication. His faith was, however, somewhat disturbed by the receipt of a duplicate copy sent to him by his ambassador in Madrid, who asserted

<sup>1</sup> Dale to Smith and Walsingham; *State Papers, France*, clxv. p. 860.

that it had been secretly sent from Rome to Philip. Afraid to suppress the League and arrest its leaders, and now almost equally afraid to ignore the alarming possibilities it seemed to contain, Henry went to Blois in a state of miserable uncertainty, and opened the Estates on the 6th December.

It was nearly a hundred years since a speaker at the Estates of Tours had declared the rights of the nation more ancient than the right of kings, and the consent of "the sovereign people (that is, the entirety of the inhabitants of the kingdom), who in the beginning created kings," essential to the passing of laws. "And the Estates-General," said he, "are the depositaries of the common will, and without their sanction no law is valid." La Roche had spoken too soon or perhaps too late, and his words fell fruitless; after him as before, the Estates remained merely the casual resource of weak and embarrassed governments; but still the nation clung fondly to the old right of representation. "The idea that there is nothing like these assemblies for relieving the people," says the Parisian lawyer, Pasquier, "is an old madness which the wisest Frenchmen cannot get out of their heads."<sup>1</sup> On this occasion, the hopes of the Third Party, which had demanded the Estates, were grievously disappointed. The election of deputies was so skilfully manipulated that the Malcontents soon abandoned all idea of opposing the great majority which was on its way to Blois, contenting themselves with protesting against the illegality of the elections; and this

<sup>1</sup> Pasquier, vol. ii. letter ix.



left the field open to the Leaguers. Guise had already recognised the importance of giving his movement a national character, and no pains had been spared to secure for it the countenance of the Estates.

Before the opening ceremony Henry had, with his mother's assistance, decided upon a course of action with regard to the League which seemed to promise at least a postponement of the evil day. He declared that he not only approved of the association which had been formed for the defence of the Church, but that he had resolved to show his zeal in that good cause by placing himself at its head. He signed the articles of the Union (in a modified form), made his court follow his example, and invited his provincial governors to obtain as many signatures as possible. The next step was a matter of course. The Estates voted the total suppression of heresy, and the King proceeded to demand the means of putting the vote into effect. Here he encountered an obstinate resistance, led by Jean Bodin and the Third Estate. The Third Estate would not furnish a sou towards the two million crowns at which the King estimated the cost of a new war; they would not hear of an alienation of crown property for the relief of his personal necessities. He might perhaps alienate the temporalities of the Church, or he might induce the nobles to serve at their own expense, or he might make the ordinary sources of revenue suffice; they desired religious unity, but they did not desire any disturbance of the public peace.<sup>1</sup> The nobles and the

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. ix. bk. xliii.

clergy consented at last "to succour the King," but the Third Estate remained obdurate. "They will neither help me nor let me help myself," Henry cried in tears; "This is too cruel!" In his perplexity he appealed to the great nobles for their advice, and requested them to state in writing whether they counselled peace or war. Most of the replies were lengthy and evasive, but that of Guise surprised the King by its brevity. He blushed, he said,—he who was merely a young soldier,—to give his opinion before so many older and wiser men. He felt himself fitter to execute orders than to give advice, and would spare neither life nor goods in the carrying out of the King's decision once it was announced, whatever it might be. But his own opinion, if he must give one, was that the Huguenots should be left unmolested "so long as they remained quietly in their own houses, without doing anything contrary to the King's will." Mayenne followed in the same strain, but he had been directed to add that if the Huguenots should unfortunately show a disposition to rebel, it would be wisest to strike quickly and to strike hard.<sup>1</sup>

The Huguenots meanwhile, with their usual disregard of etiquette, had not waited to hear the result of these consultations; they had taken the vote of the Estates in favour of religious unity as an informal declaration of war, and were already seizing whatever places they could lay hands on in Poitou and Languedoc. This evident disinclination to adopt

<sup>1</sup> Nevers, *Journal des États*.

Guise's suggestion and remain quietly in their own houses, left the King little choice, and two small armies were raised, one of which was committed to Anjou, with Nevers, Guise, and his cousin d'Aumale as his lieutenants, the other to Mayenne. Anjou's campaign in Berri and Auvergne was a very short one, marked only by the taking of the two cities of La Charité and Issoire. The garrison of the former place capitulated on condition that their lives should be spared, but for all that they would have been massacred, had not Guise insisted on the observance of the conditions. At Issoire he distinguished himself as honourably by his efforts to restrain the atrocious barbarity of the soldiery; he filled his own tent with the poor women who had fled from the burning town, and was seen carrying little children before him on his saddle across the ford of the river to place them in safety on the other side; with his own hand he killed a soldier who was ill-treating a girl.<sup>1</sup> Mayenne meanwhile was doing very well in Poitou. He took Brouage and drove Condé to take refuge in La Rochelle, and was indeed so uplifted by his success that he ventured to challenge the prince to end the campaign by a single combat, a piece of presumption which was suitably rewarded. Condé

<sup>1</sup> His humanity is commemorated in a ballad of the time, on the taking of Issoire:—

“ M. de Guise a sauvé quelques femmes,  
Et leur honneur sans doute ny diffame,  
Il les fit mettre dedans un fort château,  
A leurs maris on leur baille un cordeau,”

Leroux de Lincy, *Chants Historiques*, vol. ii.

begged to inform Mayenne "that according to the maxims universally accepted among gentlemen, combats of the kind proposed could only take place between equals"; and he must therefore be permitted to remind the Duke "of the distance which the accident of birth has placed between us."<sup>1</sup> Mayenne was now all the more anxious to follow up his victories; and the defection of Damville, who quarrelled with the Huguenots and led most of the Malcontents with him into the royal camp, had weakened the enemy so considerably that a prolonged resistance seemed impossible. But the victories won in his name had fairly terrified the King; he saw himself left alone with the Guises, and no prospect was more alarming; at the moment when the Huguenots were at odds among themselves, enfeebled by the desertion of their most powerful ally, and disheartened by their losses, Henry offered them a new Edict (Peace of Bergerac, September, 1577), which placed the Huguenots much where they were on the eve of the St. Bartholomew. The most significant clause in it was that which declared that "all leagues, associations, and confraternities made or to be made under whatever pretext, to the prejudice of our present edict, are hereby annulled, and our subjects expressly forbidden to collect money, enrol troops, or raise fortifications, under pain of rigorous punishment."

Guise, who was then at Metz, accepted the peace with his usual equanimity. He replied to the

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. ix. bk. lxiv. p. 511.

King's announcement with a letter of polite congratulation, praising God that He had granted the peace, since it seemed that "a little delay would have wrought an extreme ruin." On December he and all his brothers and cousins were in Paris. "They do not seem so contented as they have been," writes an enigmatical correspondent, "but what has been may be again. M. de Montmorency (Damville) is here too and often dines with Messieurs de Guise, so that Time does what Reason could not do."<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1578, the Cardinal of Guise died, and was succeeded in the title by his nephew Louis, the younger brother of Guise and Mayenne.

#### IV

By the end of 1578 it looked as though Henry's day of reckoning was at hand. During his four years' reign he had contrived to estrange from him all classes of his subjects; the nobles would not submit to the unbridled insolence of the King's favourites; the clergy deeply resented the concessions made to the Huguenots, and the institution of laymen and women<sup>2</sup> to abbeys and benefices;

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé, vol. iii. p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> "L'on voit des soldats, des enfants, et même des femmes jouir des revenus des évêchés et des abbayes."—Busbecq to the Emperor, in *Arch. Cur.* vol. x. p. 103. "Commettans les charges et dignités ecclésiastiques à gens indignes, à des femmes, à des capitaines."—Pasquier, bk. v. letter xiii. "Un capitaine dauphinois . . . auquel sa majesté avoit donné . . . les éveschés de Grenoble et Amiens . . . vendit à une garse de la cour l'évesché d'Amiens . . . 30,000 francs."—L'Estoile, vol. i. p. 39 (Dec. '74).



and the middle classes saw, with burning indignation, the money wrung by taxation from the poverty-stricken nation or raised by the shameless traffic in public offices, lavished with insane profusion upon foolish or indecent pastimes. The aristocrats left the court in disgust; the two other classes turned to Guise as to their only deliverer.

The great French nobles had never recognised the cadets of Lorraine as belonging precisely either to their own nation or to their own order; after three generations of French naturalisation, they were still counted as foreigners<sup>1</sup>—as parvenus still, after three alliances with the blood-royal. Guise wasted little time in trying to overcome this prejudice; he would have liked to have been friends with the Montmorencys, he did his very best to be friends with Navarre, but he saw that the clergy and the bourgeois would serve his turn quite as well. His house in Paris was open to his friends of every rank and the salons of his wife and his sister (the Duchess of Montpensier) were thronged by merchants, lawyers, curés—guests who had never before seen the inside of a nobleman's house. His hospitality was duly repaid. When the King of France showed himself in the streets of his capital, he was received with sullen silence or with covert gibes; the popular acclamations were all reserved for "the handsome King of Paris." The dull jealousy with which Henry had long contemplated his rival was now sharpened by an ever-increasing fear, and the relations between him and Guise were

<sup>1</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii., "quasi allemands."

not improved by the part taken by the Duke in the notorious "duel of the mignons." The King's favourites,—that band of handsome young men, "curled and frilled and perfumed," who "danced and swaggered and fought and followed the King everywhere,"<sup>1</sup>—had been allowed to drive the great nobles from court; they had been encouraged to offer open insults to the King's brother and sister, and it seemed there was no limit to their license. Margaret thirsted for revenge, and she knew her former lover very well; she knew that the easy and supple spirit which stooped so readily on occasion, was also on occasion the most unyielding in the world, and she deftly engaged Balzac d'Entragues, a gentleman of Guise's household, in a quarrel with Quélus, the ruling favourite. In the duel which followed, Quélus, and three of the four seconds were mortally wounded, and the King, beside himself with grief at the death of his friend, proposed to try d'Entragues as a murderer. D'Entragues, however, had taken refuge in the Hôtel Guise, and the Duke dared the King to touch him. "M. d'Entragues," said he, "did only what any gentleman ought to have done; if any one attempts to interfere with him, my sword, which has a sharp edge, shall settle the question." The Parisians, who abhorred the lawless favourites, were delighted, and the king spoke no more of bringing d'Entragues to trial; but he proceeded, as was his custom, to revenge himself on the man he was afraid to strike by striking a woman. It was at once whispered

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

that the Duchess of Guise was on too intimate terms with the young St. Mesgrin. The count, truly or untruly, began to boast of his good fortune, but the Duke was deaf to the scandal; his brothers became angry and uneasy, St. Mesgrin grew bolder; soon only one person at the court, and he the most concerned, appeared ignorant of the report. At last his brothers commissioned an intimate friend of the Duke to enlighten him. Struck by this gentleman's melancholy aspect, Guise asked what ailed him. "Monseigneur," answered Bassompierre, "I am in a difficulty; the wife of a friend of mine is said to be unfaithful to her husband, and as he suspects nothing, his relations are uncertain what course to take. They have consulted me, but it is a delicate matter, and I should be grateful for your advice."

"I can only tell you what I should do were I in your friend's place," replied Guise. "My own wife, thank heaven, is above suspicion; but were I less fortunate, and were any man to presume to accuse her, even on the pretence of doing me a kindness, I should certainly kill him. Let the husband's friends avenge his wrong if they please, but let them hold their tongues about it."

Bassompierre carried the message to Mayenne, who acted upon the hint, and that night St. Mesgrin was assassinated on his leaving the Louvre. "There was no inquiry made, his Majesty being warned that the Duke of Guise had had him murdered."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile, vol. i. p. 260.

Early in 1578 Anjou escaped from Paris and began his erratic enterprises in the Low Countries; in the summer Catherine left Paris for the South, ostensibly to conduct the Queen of Navarre back to the husband whom she had not seen since his flight from Paris two years before; in the autumn of that year Don John of Austria died at Namur, and his death marks the turning-point in Guise's career.

The relations between Spain and the Guises had been extremely intimate so long as the Cardinal of Lorraine lived, but since his death the connection had distinctly relaxed. The Spanish envoy, as has been observed, had no very high opinion of the rest of the family, and though Philip made a point of displaying his goodwill towards the Cardinal's nephews, he could hardly expect to meet in the young men that servile anxiety to please which had sometimes complicated the affairs of the Cardinal's adopted country. Mary Stuart was the link that bound Philip and the house of Lorraine together; for despairing of help from France, Mary of Guise's daughter had turned to Spain. She had always reckoned her uncle, the Cardinal, her most faithful friend; and she felt his loss very deeply. "God has taken from me the creature that I love the best," she wrote; "what more can I say? I have lost, at one blow, my father and my uncle."<sup>1</sup> For some time after his death her cousins showed no inclination to concern themselves with her sorrows. In May, 1575, Zuniga told Philip that "the

<sup>1</sup> Labanoff, *Recueil*, vol. iv.; Mary to the Archbishop of Glasgow, 20th Feb. 1575.

house of Guise troubled themselves very little about the Queen of Scots,"<sup>1</sup> and in June, 1576, Mary urged her representative in Paris to remonstrate with her kinsmen for not showing more attention to the Spanish ambassador. "This will not only prove disadvantageous to me," she writes, "but they will lose one of the strongest supports of our house."<sup>2</sup> This letter of Mary's shows that until the Peace of Beaulieu, Guise had not adopted his uncle's Spanish policy; with the organisation of the League he felt the need of a foreign ally, but even then he had no intention of making that ally, Spain. Philip's brother, the newly appointed Viceroy of the Netherlands, was more likely to answer his purpose than Philip himself, and when in October, 1576, Don John of Austria passed through France on his way to Brussels, he spent a few hours with Guise at Joinville.

Don John<sup>3</sup> was then a young man in the prime of life, full of romantic aspirations, his head a little turned perhaps by his great victory over the Turks at Lepanto. He too had been dreaming of crowns, to his brother's displeasure,—of an African empire at first and afterwards of one nearer home, of Scotland, perhaps of England; for three months after Lepanto, Mary had offered to marry the young soldier with whose

<sup>1</sup> Teulet, vol. v. p. 128; Zuniga to Philip, 17th March 1575.

<sup>2</sup> Labanoff, *Recueil*, vol. iv.; Mary to the Archbishop of Glasgow: "continuez d'entretenir l'ambassadeur d'Espagne. . . . Si messieurs mes parens en font si peu de compte outre que cela tourne à mon désavantage, ils perdront un des meilleurs appuis de nostre maison. . . . Vous ne sçauriez faillir . . . leur rémonstrer combien feu M. le Cardinal de Lorraine se sçavoit bien se prévaloir de ce costé là."

<sup>3</sup> Illegitimate son of the Emperor Charles V., and half-brother, therefore, of Philip II. Born in Feb. 1545, he won the battle of Lepanto, 7th Oct. 1571.



fame the world was ringing, as the price of her freedom.<sup>1</sup> It was enough to set a colder man than Don John on fire—the prospect of winning that prize had dazzled clearer eyes than his ; but Philip was not liberal in the matter of crowns, and he meant to seat himself some day on the English throne. He offered his brother the post of viceroy of the Netherlands, which the death of Requesens had left vacant, and postponed the Scottish question for the moment. Don John light-heartedly undertook the task which had baffled Margaret of Parma and had daunted Alva ; it was only a step from the Flemish to the English coast, and he hoped to take it some day if necessary without his brother's permission. It was natural that he should turn to Mary's cousin for assistance in the great enterprise ; and at Joinville the two young men agreed to overthrow Elizabeth and to release Mary, while keeping Philip in the dark.<sup>2</sup> To keep Philip in the dark was not easy ; his ambassador in Paris was soon aware that the viceroy was secretly negotiating with Guise, and unknown to either of them a vigilant watch was kept on the messengers that came and went between Brussels and Joinville. The Spaniard notes with satisfaction that the latter is “a place badly guarded, whose walls might be climbed perhaps, so that hidden behind a curtain one might overhear what was being said.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teulet, vol. v. p. 97 ; or sooner, Digges, p. 148, 19th Oct. 1571.

<sup>2</sup> The double plot between Guise and Don John against France and Spain described by Antonio Perez seems to have had no existence except in Antonio's imagination ; but Philip did not approve of his brother having any political secrets.

<sup>3</sup> *Papiers de Simancas*, in Bouillé, vol. iii. p. 176.

He thought there was "subject for thought and discussion" in an interview which the Dukes of Lorraine and Guise were supposed to have arranged with Don John on the frontier,—“a meeting,” he says, “which may not prove convenient for any who are present at it.” At the same time Guise was warned of strangers well mounted on Spanish horses who were continually prowling round his house. The secret could not have been very well kept, for De Thou asserts that “it was reported from all parts that the Guises were arranging the marriage of Queen Mary with Don John, without the knowledge of the Spanish court.” For two years they carried on a close correspondence, but the descent on the English shore was continually delayed, and in October, 1578, Don John died, heart-broken at his failure to achieve an impossible task; the Dutch anvil (to adapt Beza’s saying), on which he had hoped to forge a great future for himself, had worn out one more hammer.

By the end of 1578, as has been shown, the King and Guise were on very bad terms. While the King lived, Guise had nothing to hope for, and although he might undoubtedly have aroused the League to action, he had no intention of doing so unless events made it necessary. He never had, from first to last, any idea of deposing Henry; his hopes were concentrated on the King’s death, which never seemed very far off. In the meantime he had no occupation, no outlet for his talents; what was worse still, he had no means of restoring his

shattered fortunes. This last circumstance was probably the one which influenced him most directly.

Large though the revenues of the House of Guise were, their expenditure went always beyond them. Francis of Guise, who was at one time the wealthiest man in France, had left behind him debts to the amount of two hundred thousand crowns; his brother Charles not much less. Henry of Guise's own tastes were not extravagant; personally, indeed, he was extremely abstemious and as indifferent to privation as he was to fatigue,<sup>1</sup> although he lived in the sumptuous fashion which he judged suited to his rank and still more to his pretensions. But besides the army of pensioners, servants, and hangers-on which was attached to every great house, he maintained, as his father and uncle had done, a multitude of agents in all parts of the kingdom and even beyond it,—men who supplied him with information, and were always ready to agitate and to organise. He had been obliged in 1574 to borrow the money for the Cardinal's funeral expenses—it was a very grand funeral—from the burghers of Rheims; in 1577 his affairs were in the greatest disorder, and every month he was "forced to sell one of his estates to keep himself." His grandmother, the old Duchess Antoinette, was so much distressed by his financial embarrassments, "by the confusion of debts from which he could never get free," that she wrote she "could think of nothing except that it was not enough to make fine schemes unless some of them were carried out," and therefore advised the sale

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. x.

of his favourite estate of Nanteuil as the only means of living "a little more at his ease." Guise took the old lady's advice and sold Nanteuil le Haudoin to Gaspard de Schomberg (August, 1578) for one hundred and twenty thousand crowns; he had refused to sell it to the King the year before for a much larger sum.<sup>1</sup> But even this sacrifice only partially relieved him of his immense burden of debt; he still owed money everywhere, to bankers and merchants, to his own cousins. And it thus came about that in Philip of Spain he saw, not merely an outlet for those brilliant abilities for which France, it seemed, had no use, but also a means of escaping from those desperate pecuniary difficulties which harassed him at every turn. Philip was assured by his ambassador that it was well worth his while to attach the Duke to his service, "in consideration of his rank, his following, his personal worth, and the importance of his family, all the world esteeming him the chief man in the kingdom; and as being well-disposed towards the King of Spain, initiated already into his service and capable in the great affairs that might supervene of procuring greater advantages in one day than would be otherwise obtained in many years." He agreed therefore to associate Guise with himself in the plot for England's downfall, and undertook, in return for the services of his necessitous friend, to pay him a yearly pension of two hundred thousand livres.<sup>2</sup> It is only just to remember that when Guise first bent his neck to that heavy yoke, he was planning not the ruin of

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> Bouillé, *Papiers de Simancas*, vol. iii. p. 79.

France but the conquest of England; and this is the explanation of the otherwise unaccountable fact that for nearly seven years the League remained dormant.

Guise had now definitely espoused his cousin's cause; his correspondence with Spain<sup>1</sup> is full of those schemes for her rescue which kept Elizabeth's advisers in perpetual anxiety. In April, 1578, he had already inquired of Vargas whether Spain would assist the Duke of Lorraine and himself in an expedition, when the right moment should arrive. In December of that year Elizabeth was dangerously ill, and Guise planned an invasion of England to take place in the event of her death; but Elizabeth recovered and action was postponed—a circumstance which repeated itself over and over again during the next few years. There were moments when the conquest of England appeared the simplest thing possible; in February, 1580, Vargas believed that in three days all England could be easily turned to revolt, and that Philip, "having that country under his control," would not be long in reducing the Netherlands to obedience, and would then be "in a position to dictate laws to the world." In May, 1582, England was not yet under Philip's control, and a fresh plan was on foot. There were midnight conferences between Guise, Father Holt, Father Creighton and Tassis, Vargas's successor, and Guise proposed that this time the affair should be organised in the Pope's name, under pretext of an expedition against the Barbary pirates; his Holiness

<sup>1</sup> In Teulet, *Relations Politiques*, vol. v.



was to provide the men, and Philip the money. The Jesuits, however, thought his Holiness unequal to the part assigned to him ; they would rather that he should provide the funds, and that the conduct of the expedition should be left to Philip. Philip saw objections to the plan proposed ; he always did, but he warned Tassis that no one was to suspect him of making difficulties ; he was on the contrary to make the Pope bear all the blame of the delay. In May, 1583, Guise was weary of waiting for Philip and the Pope ; he demanded a hundred thousand crowns with which he would manage the whole business himself ; he had now a scheme which he promised would "make a great noise in the world if it were carried into execution." Philip demurred to producing so large a sum ; the Pope ought, he said, in common justice to be more liberal than he was ; could not Guise apply to him direct ? Philip must also be made acquainted with the details of the new and mysterious scheme ; Tassis was to get all the information that he could, and the secret of the plot must this time on no account be allowed to leak out. Did Tassis think that Guise had any motive which he was concealing from Philip, and if so, what was it ? Fresh plans followed each other in rapid succession, with fresh demands for money to carry them out. Philip was liberal with assurances of his affection and confidence, but he hesitated to furnish Guise with those tangible proofs which were absolutely necessary to him. Sometimes they planned a descent on England, sometimes on Scotland. On one occasion Guise

went so far, unknown to Philip, to commission an agent (Charles Talbot) to examine the English harbours, to inquire into the amount of the provisions that might be obtained on landing, and to discover the means of procuring horses for the transport of artillery ; and to privately assure the English Catholics that as soon as Mary was released and upon the throne all foreigners should leave the country ; he pledged himself to drive them out, if necessary, by force. In November, 1583, Guise entreated Philip to make haste ; in April, 1584, Tassis deplored the obstinacy of Guise, who insisted upon carrying out his own plan, and who was besides growing suspicious of Philip's good faith. Philip ordered Tassis to reassure the Duke ; he had no idea of not carrying out the scheme, but it was a matter that must be cautiously arranged. "In affairs of consequence," said he, "it is best to walk on leaden feet." In June, 1584, the death of Anjou transformed the whole situation. For four or five hours the King and Guise stood side by side, watching the prince's funeral procession pass slowly by on its way to Notre-Dame ; and the profound melancholy of the Duke's expression attracted the notice of that malicious chronicler, L'Estoile, who judged it "more appearance than reality." And yet Guise might well have contemplated with unfeigned regret the closing scene of that brief, wasted life ; for his own reputation went down into the vault with Anjou's bier, the bells that tolled for Francis of Valois sounded the death-knell of his own honour.

Up to this moment Guise's relations with Philip

did not necessarily involve treason to his own sovereign, although at times no doubt they came very near it; the alliance was directed against England, not against France; and Guise had in the beginning expressly excluded the interests of his own sovereign from its sphere of operations. Philip, however, had an altogether different purpose in view; he had no intention of paying Guise to invade England, and he had soldiers enough at his disposal without encumbering himself with a man so ill to manage as the Lorrainer. From the first he intended Guise not to conquer England but to divide France, and towards this end he directed all those means in whose use he was an unrivalled adept. In those long private conferences between Tassis and the Duke, there was always an invisible pressure brought to bear, an undercurrent of dangerous suggestion. The awkwardness of the Duke's position was emphasised with singular adroitness. In September, 1582, for example, Tassis was directed to glide lightly from the misfortunes of the King of Scots to those which were threatening the Duke himself; he was to allude to the bad state of Henry's health, to point out the critical situation in which Guise would find himself, were the kingdom to fall into the hands of his enemies Anjou and Navarre. The affair of Salcedo<sup>1</sup> proved Anjou's feeling towards him, and if Navarre were to mount the French throne, the danger would be greater still; if by any chance Guise should wish to be beforehand

<sup>1</sup> Salcedo attempted to poison Anjou, and confessed under torture that he had been instigated by Guise. The accusation was afterwards withdrawn, and was (as Philip perhaps had the best reason to know) probably groundless.

with his enemies, he might count with certainty on the support of Philip. This promise of protection was continually repeated; as Guise's relations with the French court became more and more strained, Philip's offers increased in cordiality.

Henry had shown plainly that he was afraid to injure Guise; with incredible stupidity he had proceeded to show that he was not afraid to affront him. The old dispute about precedence between Guise and his brother-in-law Montpensier had been repeatedly decided in Guise's favour; letters patent were suddenly issued (1576) reversing this decision. In the war of 1577 an independent command was given to Mayenne and a subordinate one to his elder brother; in the Lovers' war (1580) Mayenne was again entrusted with an army and Guise was left unemployed. When Henry instituted his new order of the Holy Spirit (1578), Guise was pointedly excluded from the twenty-five gentlemen selected for the honour; at the festival of the Order of St. Michael, which the nobles were accustomed to avoid by leaving the capital,<sup>1</sup> ashamed of being seen wearing what was called "le collier à toute bête," he was as pointedly desired to be present. He could not ask a few guests to tennis without bringing upon them a reprimand from the King.<sup>2</sup> Guise accepted these slights with the greatest composure; it was impossible

<sup>1</sup> *Rel. V. A.* vol. ii. p. 547.

<sup>2</sup> "Ils (Guise and Mayenne) sont peu suivis et font souvent des parties de paume, pour attirer la noblesse mais ceux qui y vont deux fois se peuvent assurer d'avoir le réprimande. . . . Croyez qu'ils n'ont nul crédit ni moyen de vous faire mal." —Marg. de Valois, *Mém. et Lettres*, p. 284; Letter to Navarre, March, 1582.

to irritate him. He resigned to Montpensier the privilege for which he and his father before him had fought so tenaciously without a murmur ; he served under Anjou, to whom he had for years been undisguisedly hostile, with cheerful alacrity ; he never evinced the least jealousy of his brother ; he came from Joinville, at the King's bidding, to walk with the rabble of St. Michael ; and he acquiesced calmly in his exclusion from the knights of the Holy Spirit. His readiness to meet the King's wishes had, however, its limits. He refused to part with his office of Grand Master, which Henry wanted for Epernon, his new favourite ; and nothing could induce him to appear in the grand procession of penitents, with which Henry inaugurated his new Penitential Congregation of the Annunciation of Our Lady. The King, led by the Cardinal of Guise and followed by Mayenne, Epernon, and the whole court, trudged through the pouring rain, scourge in hand, in the grotesque habit of the fraternity, the long white cowl drawn over the head and shoulders with two holes for the eyes, amid the laughter of the mob, to whom these exhibitions, so common in the South, were quite new ; but Guise was among the lookers-on. There was nothing to gain by making himself ridiculous.<sup>1</sup>

To fill the places of the nobles who had left the court, Henry had created a number of new peers ; his wife's brother was made Duke of Mercœur, and

<sup>1</sup> "Ce fut un sujet de raillerie pour les uns et d'indignation pour les autres qui crioient tout haut que les auteurs de ces spectacles se moquoient de Dieu et des hommes."—De Thou, vol. ix. bk. lxxviii.



among other less reasonable promotions were the dignities conferred upon Jean Nogaret de la Valette and on Anne de Joyeuse, who were made Dukes of Epernon and Joyeuse. These two young men, younger sons of good families, who had come penniless to court, became the objects of the most senseless infatuation on the part of the King. They were granted precedence of all peers except those descended, as were Nevers, Guise, and Nemours, from sovereign houses, and princes of the blood; they had the entry to the King's chamber at all hours; Joyeuse was married to the Queen's sister with the dowry of a princess-royal, and the King, after vainly trying to marry one of the Duke of Lorraine's daughters to Epernon,<sup>1</sup> gave him as a bride Margu  rite de Foix, a granddaughter of the Constable de Montmorency, in spite of the indignant protests of the head of her house. He celebrated the wedding of Joyeuse by festivities which cost him over three million livres,<sup>2</sup> at a time when his downtrodden people were coining their life-blood into taxes, and he hardly knew where to find money for his ordinary household expenses. Every advantage, every preferment, was heaped upon these two favourites; they ousted even

<sup>1</sup> "Le roy agit de tout son pouvoir pour faire le mariage du duc d'Ep  rnon avec la fille du duc de Lorraine; cependant le p  re a tant d'horreur pour une alliance si indigne qu'il met tout en usage pour l'emp  cher."—Busbecq to the Emperor, 11th May, 1583; *Arch. Cur.* vol. x.

<sup>2</sup> This statement, incredible though it seems, is made by several excellent contemporary authorities, *e.g.* De Thou, tome iv. pp. 31-35; L'Estoile, Sept. 1581. M. Martin reckons the sum (1,200,000 gold crowns) at about "onze millions de notre monnaie, qui en repr  sente vingt cinq ou trente de valeur relative."

Catherine from her position, and they flaunted their wealth, their boundless credit with the King, and their authority at his court, in Guise's face, with a reckless insolence that would have tried the meekest of men.

In spite of the self-possession with which Guise submitted to the King's malice, he could not remain unaffected by it ; it did not strengthen him to resist the subtle assaults of his Spanish tempters. He had never been either disinterested or loyal ; but he did not fall without a struggle. In 1583 he made his last stand. "I am being forced," he cried, "into war, but if I must fight I would rather fight in England than in France." Philip, however, had no intention of leaving him the choice. Guise was to earn his pension, not by futile attempts to interfere in Philip's English policy, but by making himself useful in France at the right time. The King of Spain had been profoundly irritated by the intervention of the Duke of Anjou in Flanders, and he was resolved upon showing Henry to what the encouragement of rebellious subjects might lead. Overcoming in his exasperation his aversion to heresy, he had offered to ally himself with Navarre if the Huguenot would provoke a new civil war, but Navarre refused and the Spanish envoys departed with a significant farewell. "If you will not trade with us," they said, "the other merchants are ready."<sup>1</sup>

Henry had now been married eight years and was still childless and in very bad health ; the next heir was Navarre. To a great part of the nation the idea

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis Mornay, *Mém. et Corresp.*

of seeing an excommunicated heretic on the throne of St. Louis was quite intolerable, and many of them anticipated from it nothing less than the abolition of the Roman Catholic religion.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the dynasty could not be changed without very grave opposition. Catherine de' Medici had a candidate ready; she would have liked to transfer her son-in-law's forfeited rights to her eldest grandson, the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, afterwards the Duke of Bar. He was the son of Charles of Lorraine and Catherine's daughter, Claude, and was therefore a Valois on his mother's side; he had been educated at the French Court, and was young enough, Catherine hoped, to be guided by a more experienced head. Guise, on the other hand, was not anxious to aid the elder branch of his family to emerge from the peaceful retirement in which it had lived so long, and he judged far more truly than Catherine the obstacles in the way. The King, roused for once from his ordinary apathy, was exerting himself to procure Navarre's "conversion" in order that he might be regarded indisputably as the heir; but to see Navarre on the throne under any circumstances would not have suited Guise; and what was of more importance, it would not have suited Philip. It seemed that Henry's successor must be a Catholic and must be a Bourbon, and Guise discovered the

<sup>1</sup> "C'est avec raison qu'on augure que cette mort va causer de grandes révolutions dans le royaume, car les provinces et les villes paraissent obstinés à ne reconnaître qu'un roi de leur religion. . . . Ces mouvemens paraissent si certains et si funestes que plusieurs se préparent à sortir du royaume pour ne pas s'y trouver enveloppés."—Busbecq, *Arch. Cur.* vol. x. pp. 127, 128, and 115.

very person that was wanted in Navarre's uncle, the Cardinal of Bourbon. He was a man of sixty-two, as weak and vain as his elder brother Anthony had been, and he was easily convinced of the legitimacy of his claim. He laid aside his ecclesiastical dress, petitioned the Pope to release him from his vows, talked of marrying Catherine of Guise, the widow of Montpensier,<sup>1</sup> and was gravely recognised by the Guises and their adherents as the heir to the throne. In September, 1584, Tassis, who had been Philip's *chargé d'affaires* in Paris since January, 1581, was superseded by a man of higher rank and of very much stronger character, Bernardino Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador who had been so unceremoniously expelled from London on the discovery of the Throgmorton conspiracy. On the 31st of December 1584 Philip's representatives met Guise, Mayenne, an envoy from the Cardinal, and some other members of the Lorraine family at Joinville, and they all signed a compact by which they bound themselves to maintain the Cardinal's claims against all competitors, to tolerate the exercise of no religion except the Roman Catholic in the kingdom, and to restore Cambray to Spain. The King of Spain pledged himself to provide six hundred thousand crowns in the first six months, and fifty thousand crowns a month so long as the war lasted, but if the Cardinal succeeded to the throne he was to refund the King of Spain's outlay. The convention was to remain a secret until all the signatories were ready to reveal it.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Montpensier died in September, 1582.

If Guise saw in this last article a saving clause which might still enable him to await, as he had always desired to do, the King's death, he soon found that he had over-estimated his strength. Orange had been assassinated a few weeks after Anjou's death, and in February, 1585, the States, left without a leader, offered themselves to France. Philip, alarmed lest Henry should consent, insisted that the Leaguers should lose no time in making the necessary diversion, and Guise obeyed, but not, it is said, until Mendoza told him that "there was a point at which dissimulation became cowardice," and threatened to show the Treaty of Joinville to the King.<sup>1</sup> On the 21st of March he seized Châlons, a manifesto was published in the name of the Cardinal of Bourbon, "whom they make the Asse to beare their whole burden,"<sup>2</sup> in which all the miseries of France were indirectly laid to the King's charge; and on the 4th of May Guise signed the receipt for the first instalment of the contribution promised by Philip to the League. "We, Cardinal of Bourbon, Loys of Lorraine, Cardinal of Guize, and Henry of Lorraine, Duke of Guize, both in our own names and in the names of all those included in our common league, confess by these presents to have received from his Catholic Majesty, by the hands of Jehan de la Couche his commissioner, the sum of three hundred thousand crowns . . . which is the first payment of the sum

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. ix. bk. lxxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Stafford to Walsingham; *State Papers*, Mardin's Collection.



which his Catholic Majesty promised to furnish, beginning from the last day of last March, on account of the Holy League.”<sup>1</sup>

Henry was not ignorant of the progress of the conspiracy, although he had taken no steps to interrupt it. It was not so much that he was absorbed, as Sir Edward Stafford, the English ambassador, accused him of being, in “Vanities and Shewes of Delight,” as that his habitual inertness had now become an incurable disease, and he was as a man slipping down an icy slope, who is not the more capable of arresting his progress because he discerns clearly the abyss below. Stafford reports that one day the King told Guise and Nevers that he had heard from Venice of a conspiracy against the government in which some of the chief of the State were engaged; the Senate had asked for his advice, and he would be glad to hear in what way they thought the conspirators should be dealt with. “Asked such a question uppon a sudden at the King’s hands . . . both remained amazed. The one of them could never be gotten to answeare anything; the other, viz. Nevers, uppon mutch pressinge answered . . . yitt was best to enquire diligently” if the charge were true, and then “yitt was a case disputable whether Rigor of Justice or a gentell admonition were the better waye. The King went awaye byting his lip.”<sup>2</sup> He grew visibly more morose and more capricious; he suspected his mother of being in league with his

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé, vol. iii. p. 504.

<sup>2</sup> Mardin’s *Coll. of State Papers*, p. 393.

enemies, and he surrounded himself with a new body-guard of forty-five Gascons, who were bound by particular oath to render him any service he required of them. He forbade the sale of arms in Paris except to customers giving their names and addresses, and the gates of the city were more carefully guarded than usual. But beyond those trifling measures for his own personal defence he did nothing; he absolutely ignored the warnings sent him repeatedly in the early part of the year, and he was entirely occupied in devising entertainments in honour of Lord Derby, who had brought him the Order of the Garter, when the news reached him that the League was in open revolt. Champagne, Picardy, Burgundy, and Brittany declared for the League, and were followed by a considerable part of Normandy, Berri, and Dauphiné; Mercœur, his wife's brother, had joined the other Lorrainers; his sister, Margaret of Navarre, avowed herself on the side of her former lover; the Parisian pulpits savagely denounced the King as an atheist, a tyrant, and a libertine, and among the altar ornaments in the city churches the double cross<sup>1</sup> of Lorraine was set up. "It was," said Jean Bodin in a phrase which was long afterwards re coined and passed into world-wide circulation, "not a rebellion but a revolution." "A year ago,"

<sup>1</sup> The double cross became thenceforth the symbol of the League; the Catholic explanation of the symbol has been given already, the Huguenots found another interpretation for it, "less serious and less satisfactory," says Bouillé:—

"Mais dites moy, que signifie  
Que les ligueurs ont double croix?  
C'est qu'en la Ligue on crucifie  
Jésus-Christ encore une fois."

says a spectator,<sup>1</sup> "I should have said it was impossible, unthinkable."

The position, however, even then was by no means hopeless. Epernon was faithful, and the bold, unscrupulous Gascon was a host in himself; Navarre had immediately placed his forces at the King's disposal, and no one had ever yet fathomed the depths of the Huguenots' resources; Elizabeth offered help; the Protestant princes of Germany and the Catholic republic of Venice were as alarmed as England at the prospect of seeing France at the mercy of the House of Austria. Strongest defence of all, between Henry and his most determined foes there still rose that invisible barrier which Guise, for all his audacity, shrank from surmounting; the aureole of St. Louis still shone dimly round the head of his descendant, the reverence of twenty generations still guarded his stained and drooping lilies. France would have forgiven her King any sin but cowardice, any crime but desertion.

But the last of the Valois was a coward, and neither Navarre nor Epernon could save him from himself. He wrote to Navarre to beg him to keep quiet, to be on his guard, but to do nothing, and then he appealed to his mother for advice, and Catherine could only fall back upon her usual policy of gaining time; she counselled Henry to ask for a truce, to negotiate; nay, more, she offered to come down from the tower where she had spent much of her time of late in stargazing, and be the ambassador herself. She repaired,

<sup>1</sup> Cavriano to Vinta, Alberi's *Caterina de Medici*, Appendix.

accordingly, to Epernay (April, 1585), and invited Guise "as a good and loyal vassal" to explain what he wanted, telling him that she knew he could easily arrange her son's affairs if he liked. Guise replied modestly that he could do nothing of the kind. She had quite mistaken his position; so far from everything being in his hands, he had no more influence than the least of his associates; personally he would have been delighted to serve her, but he could do nothing apart from the rest. He did, however, venture to mention two or three private grievances, and pointed out the absolute necessity of excluding heretics from the succession. Finding Guise less tractable than she could wish, Catherine thought she would see what could be done with the nominal head of the League.<sup>1</sup> Guise had no confidence in the old man and would have kept him altogether out of the negotiation, but the Cardinal protested so loudly against this unkindness that Guise was obliged to pacify him by bringing him in. The Cardinal had all his life been accustomed to act under Catherine's direction, and in her presence something of his old habit of obedience returned. The Duke had gone away on business for a few days, and Catherine made such good use of her time that his brother, the Cardinal of Guise, wrote in great alarm to recall him; they were in danger of losing their figure-head. "I cannot tell you how inconstant and changeable the little man is," Guise wrote to Nevers; "I am nearly beside myself with the trouble he is giving me." Annoyed by this want of straightforwardness, he

<sup>1</sup> Nevers, *Mém.*

grew less conciliatory. Catherine had to pursue him about from place to place ; he arranged meetings and forgot to keep the appointment ; he was not softened by her supplications nor flattered by her smiles, and when she addressed him “as his Queen and Mistress,” he declined to answer at all. He knew of old that she always joined the strongest party, and that he could safely count upon her timidity, and he was not mistaken ; Catherine prayed that Heaven might punish the Leaguers for their mockery of her, but in the meantime she agreed to all their demands. On the 20th of June, when Guise had declared his intention of not renewing the truce, a treaty was concluded at Nemours and was ratified by the King on the 7th of July. Its chief provisions were—Every heretic was to be banished from the kingdom within six months ; all heretics were to be pronounced incapable of office ; the King was to employ all his forces to put these articles into effect ; he was to pay the expenses (two hundred thousand crowns) of the troops that had been levied against him ; to leave the officers and garrisons of the League in undisturbed possession of the places they had seized ; to declare that the insurgents had acted from the best of motives, zeal for the Church ; and to grant the Leaguers nine cities of security,—among them, Rheims, the coronation city ; Toul, Verdun, and St. Dizier, the keys of the eastern frontier ; and Soissons and Tours in the heart of France. The Pope heard of the treaty with stupefaction ; in Paris it was asserted that Catherine, and possibly the King also, had been secretly allied



all along to the League;<sup>1</sup> and Navarre was in the habit of declaring that the appalling and almost incredible news turned his moustache white in an hour. The King went in person to revoke his edicts of pacification and to see the new edict registered; the members of the Parliament received him in their scarlet robes of state,—“they should rather have gone clad in mourning,” said one of their number,—and the ceremony was performed in a profound and sombre silence. When he left the Palais de Justice he was greeted, to every one’s surprise, by faint cheers; it was so long since any one in Paris had cried “*Vive le Roi!*” It made a painful impression on Henry; he was persuaded that these forced acclamations had been arranged by Guise, and he guessed rightly. “It was discovered afterwards that the Leaguers had given money to a few of the common people and sweetmeats to a number of little children”<sup>2</sup> to applaud the King’s informal abdication. “I signed my last edict,” he had said to the Cardinal of Bourbon on his way to the Parliament, “against my conscience, but very willingly, because I knew it tended to the relief of my poor people; I sign this edict to-day according to my conscience, but against my will, for I know that it will prove the ruin of me and of all my realm.”<sup>3</sup>

The Parisians had long mocked at “Henry, King of France by the grace of his mother”; it remained to be seen if they would be more reverent to Henry, King of France by the grace of Guise.

<sup>1</sup> L’Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> De Thou; L’Estoile.

<sup>3</sup> Pasquier, vol. ii. bk. xi. letter x.

## V

A week after the ratification of the Treaty of Nemours, the Dukes of Lorraine and Guise, with the Cardinals of Guise and Bourbon, entered Paris, where Mayenne had already arrived. The King met them on the staircase of the Louvre with gracious cordiality, he embraced them repeatedly and conversed very pleasantly with Guise during dinner. The absence of any vestige of resentment alarmed some of Guise's adherents, and one of them wrote to warn the Duke's friends that a long sojourn at the court would do him no good. "Watch as you will," he said, "there will be a time when he will be found off his guard . . . when he will have no weapons but his valour and reputation, and these will not suffice." "If it were not that [the King] has a good heart and loves justice," said another observer, "I should be afraid of some great event."<sup>1</sup>

Guise had returned to Paris victorious, but he had not the air of a victor. "The Duke of Guise is melancholy," writes<sup>2</sup> an anonymous correspondent of the Florentine Secretary of State. "He has lost his habitual gaiety, he is hardly five-and-thirty, and his hair is already turning white on the temples." Two years before, Margaret of Navarre<sup>3</sup> had already noted with surprise on her return to the capital how old and thin he had grown, and lookers-on speculated

<sup>1</sup> Cavriano to Vinta, in Alberi.

<sup>2</sup> In Alberi, *Caterina de Medici*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Marg. de Valois, *Mém. et Lettres*: to her husband, p. 284.

with curiosity as to whether it were remorse or disappointed ambition which was turning his hair grey before his time.

It was certainly not remorse; he felt no pity but only an immense scorn for his shifty foe; and it was not in his nature to repent of a successful crime. But had the crime been successful? This was the question which pressed for a reply and could hardly be answered in the affirmative by that most clear-sighted criminal. The way of open rebellion had never commended itself to his sober Italian brain; it had been forced upon him against his better judgment, and it was already evident to him and to some others that Philip had committed a blunder for which Guise was likely to pay. The late Pope, Gregory XIII., had warmly approved of the League, but he had died in the spring, and his successor, Sixtus V., brusquely refused to sanction the violence done to order and authority in the name of religion. The enthusiasm of Nevers and of other faithful Catholics was consequently fast waning, and while Guise scoffed impatiently at the scruples of Nevers, "who will not fight unless he has a Pope's bull at the end of his lance," he was painfully sensible of the difficulty of conducting a Holy War in defiance of the Vicar of Christ. But although, contrary to all appearances, the peace had been as much a necessity for him as for the King, there were many of his warmest adherents who did not perceive it, and who held with Parma that the subject who draws sword against his sovereign should fling away the sheath. Many of them had

impoverished themselves—"this one had sold his house, that one his vineyard"—in the hope of making good their losses at the expense of the Huguenots; but while the conditions exacted at Nemours had humiliated the King and rendered a sincere reconciliation between him and the League impossible, they had not materially profited the rank and file of the Leaguers, who saw their prospect of spoiling the heretics grow fainter every day.<sup>1</sup> Philip, too, had strongly disapproved of the peace, and above all things it was necessary that Philip should be kept in good humour; for Guise was now in worse pecuniary straits than ever, struggling in a morass of debt, and solely dependent upon the Spaniard's help for the carrying out of his every scheme. In proportion as he showed himself haughtier to his own sovereign, he became humbler to the King of Spain; he was always begging, in heavy, laborious epistles, full of obsequious gratitude to Philip for the favours done him in the past and of servile entreaties for continued assistance. But Philip would only assist him on condition that he advanced; while the Church, whose champion he was, reproached him already with having gone too far.

Henry III. was in as much financial difficulty as his antagonist, but it troubled him very much less. His attitude, since the signing of the peace, had become such as to perplex both his enemies and his friends. From the first he had made no attempt to disguise the shameful submission to which he had

<sup>1</sup> Cavriano to Vinta, Alberi, Appendix, p. 457.

been compelled ; so far from endeavouring to hide his fetters, he seemed to find pleasure in jangling them in the face of the world. As soon as the edict had been registered, he sent for the First President of the Parliament, the Provost of the merchants, the Dean of the Cathedral, and for the Cardinal of Guise. "I am delighted," he said smiling,<sup>1</sup> "that, following the good advice given me, I have been led to revoke my last edict of pacification. I confess that I hesitated to adopt this resolution, not because my zeal for religion is less than that of others ; but because my experience seemed to teach me that I should thereby encounter almost insurmountable obstacles. However, since the matter has been decided for me, I hope that with the aid of so many worthy persons, I may come well out of the war upon which I am about to engage. . . . It is, as I have said, against my own opinion that this course has been taken, but since it is so, you who have insisted upon breaking the peace, will have to find the means of carrying on the war. I know how much satisfaction my decision has given the citizens of my good town of Paris, and I am sure that they will not grudge me the two hundred thousand crowns which I require at once. . . . As to the further expenses, the clergy will be expected to pay the largest share, and since it is a holy war, undertaken on behalf of the Church, I need have no scruple in using the Church's revenues, nor need I wait for the Pope's permission, since I have the sanction of my conscience." The representatives of

<sup>1</sup> Davila,



the city were aghast at the demand; they would have remonstrated, but the King cut them short. "It would have been better, then," he said, "to have believed me and to have maintained the peace, rather than to have decided upon war behind your counters and in your chancels; I fear that in destroying the Sermon we are greatly endangering the Mass. But the time for talking is past: we have now only to act." On that he withdrew, leaving the listeners astonished and confused; the cold irony of these phrases was far enough removed from the helpless tears they had seen him shed at Blois.

With the same disregard for appearances, he abandoned the conduct of the war to Guise; he took no step without asking his advice, one might almost say his permission, and he invited the Duke to name the generals to whom the command of the two armies which were raised should be entrusted. Guise chose the command of the force that was to defend the frontier for himself, preferring to remain within easy reach of Paris, and gave the army of Guienne to his brother. The Papal bull excommunicating Navarre and Condé was published in September, in spite of the noble protest of the Parisian Parliament; in October, 1586, a new edict reduced the six months' grace offered to the Huguenots to a fortnight, and the new war began.

It was not long before it appeared that the King, who had so lately betrayed the Huguenots, was now betraying the League. He was obviously much more interested in trying to intercept Guise's

correspondence than in accomplishing the object of the war ; Mayenne was furnished neither with men nor with money, and as soon as he began to gain ground in Guienne, the King desired him to carry the campaign into Languedoc, where Montmorency was governor, intending thereby to widen the breach between the Guises and their ancient rival. Guise, however, wrote peremptorily to his brother to forbid him to go ; Mayenne was "by no means and at no one's order to accept that charge, lest he should offend the Marshal, who was a Catholic, and others who had given them succour and aid." He was, on the contrary, to "sit down before some place in Guienne . . . and to forge remonstrances, to make continual difficulties, dwelling upon the scarcity of provisions, the weather, the strength of the towns, the mortifications experienced by those who had been before him ;" then he was quite suddenly to ask to be relieved of his command, but he was on no account to go. He was also to do his very best to detach Navarre's followers. "Do not forget to promise them pensions ; we shall have the means of paying, I shall satisfy every one."<sup>1</sup>

The death of Mary Stuart (February, 1587) gave the house of Lorraine a new martyr. "The Leaguers shouted that she had died for the Catholic faith . . . and in this opinion they were adroitly maintained by the preachers, who canonised her daily in their sermons."<sup>2</sup> Months passed, however, and

<sup>1</sup> In Bouillé.

<sup>2</sup> L'Estoile.

Mary was still unavenged, and the French heretics were still holding their ground ; the most zealous members of the League grew impatient and began to blame their chief for his inactivity. The delegates of the Sixteen Quarters of Paris and the city clergy murmured that the interests of the Holy Union were being neglected ; they began to arrange little conspiracies on their own account, to seize the King's person and to arm Paris against him.<sup>1</sup> Catherine of Guise, Duchess of Montpensier, was the moving spring of all these machinations ; she had an implacable hatred of the King, and was willing to lend herself to the wildest schemes for his destruction. At the last moment, however, the plots were always discovered or the courage of their promoters failed. When Mayenne arrived from the south, it seemed a good opportunity to take some decisive step, and a few of the Parisian conspirators waited upon him late one night, to complain of the Duke's delays and to propose that he should take his brother's place. Mayenne allowed himself to be seduced by his sister and her confederates ; an elaborate plot was arranged to seize the Arsenal, the Bastille, and the Town Hall, to blockade the Louvre, to imprison the King, and to cut the throats of all the royalist nobles, but the scheme was revealed to the King by Nicolas Poulain, the intrepid spy who had interrupted others of the same kind, and measures were privately taken to defeat it. On this, Mayenne, who was not full of

<sup>1</sup> Procès-verbal de Nicolas Poulain, in *Arch. Cur.* vol. xi.

resources, could think of nothing better than to retire into his government of Burgundy, and though he was half afraid of being arrested before he could escape, nothing of the kind occurred. He went with much misgiving to the Louvre to take leave of the King, who received him as amiably as ever. "Ah, M. de Mayenne," said he, "how is this? You are deserting your good Leaguers?"<sup>1</sup> Mayenne, greatly embarrassed, murmured that he did not understand the King's allusion, and Henry did not trouble to explain it. When Guise heard of these proceedings he was very angry, and sent one of his officers to ask the Parisians what they meant; he had promised to act at the right time. Was he to understand that his word was not enough for them? The Parisians, very much frightened both of the King and of Guise, made all sorts of apologies, and promised not to do it again.<sup>2</sup>

Harassed by the peevish impatience of the Sixteen, tricked by the King, who was trying surreptitiously to treat with Navarre, and with Philip's yoke pressing more and more heavily on his shoulders, Guise began to lose something of his composure; his temper grew a little uncertain, his judgment less sure. His letters to the King were less ceremoniously polite than they had been; he deliberately disregarded his wishes and hardly troubled to find an excuse. In June (1587) Henry went to Meaux, requesting Guise to meet him there, "that they might confer together about the public weal," but Guise did not go and Henry went

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> Poulain, Procès-verbal.

back disappointed to Paris. In July the King invited him to Meaux again, in an affectionate autograph letter, and this time he came unwillingly, persuaded by the Queen-mother. He believed the conference was a pretext for his assassination. "Putting aside the doubt about my life," he wrote to Mendoza, "I have resolved to set out (for Meaux) at once, shutting my eyes to all risks, since the safety of the Catholic religion and the general welfare of Christianity is concerned. I am going therefore with all diligence to make the King speak out plainly, and by depriving him of every excuse for his pernicious design of peace to make him embark openly in this war, in which you may believe we shall not fail to show the necessary courage, industry, and intelligence."<sup>1</sup> The King received him graciously, and Epernon, meeting Guise in the council chamber, "they embraced each other as though they were the greatest friends." Henry begged Guise to think of peace, to consider the miseries of the country and the great foreign army about to invade their land; he did not intend to allow more than one religion in the kingdom, and still he would be glad to "purchase a good peace." Guise replied coldly that he saw no way of obtaining such a thing without hurt to religion: and Henry dropped the subject and began instead to discuss the new campaign.

The King had now three armies at his disposal. One under Joyeuse was sent to crush Navarre in Guienne; another was entrusted to Guise, to oppose

<sup>1</sup> In Bouillé.



the entrance into France of the German auxiliaries which Navarre and Condé had engaged ; the third Henry reserved for himself. Joyeuse was sent splendidly equipped into Poitou, and Guise was also promised "a fine force,"—forty to fifty companies of men-at-arms, four thousand Swiss, and a sum of two hundred thousand crowns for his expenses. But nothing could have been further from Henry's intentions than to supply the Duke with this formidable command. He had in fact decided that this was a fair opportunity of getting rid of the man whose hand, to use L'Estoile's phrase, he always felt on his collar, at the least possible risk to himself. The auxiliary army was a large one, and if Guise could be prevailed upon to undertake the defence of the frontier with an extremely inferior force, the Germans could hardly fail to cross Champagne over the governor's body. The grand prospects set before Guise proved therefore the purest illusion. The two hundred thousand crowns dwindled into less than a fourth of the sum ; and the Balafré found himself left with half a dozen companies of men-at-arms and a couple of regiments of infantry, to oppose the entrance of some twenty-five thousand Swiss and German mercenaries. To his vehement reproaches made by letter and by messenger, Henry returned no reply ; he knew that in any case he could rely upon Guise to stay and face the situation.

For some months the agents of Navarre and Condé had been engaged in raising an army with which to

reinforce the scanty force at the disposal of the Huguenot leaders, at bay in Guienne and Poitou. The negotiations which began in October, 1586, shortly after the publication of the papal bull, were not concluded till January, 1587, when Duke John Casimir of Bavaria agreed to furnish some ten thousand men, to which the Swiss Protestant Cantons added about fifteen thousand more. The young Duke of Bouillon promised to join them with two thousand French infantry and three hundred men-at-arms, and Navarre was to contribute four thousand musketeers, under François de Châtillon, Coligny's eldest son. The troops mustered at Strasburg (without Châtillon, who was to meet them a little later), and in the third week in August they crossed the borders of Lorraine near Blamont.<sup>1</sup>

To conduct an army of twenty-five thousand men from the north-east corner of France to the south-west, through a well-watered country, in which most of the fords and bridges were held by the enemy, evading or defeating three armies by the way, was not, under the most favourable circumstances, a very simple matter ; the conditions under which it was now attempted made the result a foregone conclusion. The mercenaries had no general ; their movements were directed by a council of war, consisting of the Prussian Baron Dohna, who commanded the Germans ; Clervant, who commanded the Swiss ; the Duke of Bouillon, nominally the commander-in-chief, whom no one thought of obeying ; the King of Navarre's envoys ;

<sup>1</sup> Michel de la Huguerye, *Mémoires*. Ed. Ruble.

and La Huguerye, John Casimir's clever little secretary, who had been the confidential agent of several very great personages. The initial difficulty was that of deciding upon a route. Navarre had instructed his envoys to bring the army across Lorraine, that the moderate Catholics might observe that his operations were directed against the chiefs of the League rather than against the King ; John Casimir, who was allied by marriage to Lorraine, had enjoined La Huguerye to see that his relative's domains were not invaded ; Bouillon was uneasy about his little state and would willingly have led the troops round by Sedan, perhaps detaching a regiment or two to protect it ; the Germans and the Swiss, two of a trade, could not agree ; and Bouillon's French gentlemen heartily despised them both. The council of war spent more time in debate and recrimination than in the military disposition of their troops, and among minor hindrances was the importance the German officers attached to regular meals ; no matter how serious the discussion might be, they would always interrupt it to dine at their usual hour.<sup>1</sup>

Like a rudderless vessel,<sup>2</sup> the great mass came drifting into France, shifting its course perpetually, blown hither and thither by every breath of debate, a trail of black desolation always in its wake. They plundered the villages and trampled the vineyards, and ate and drank to excess till disease fastened upon them, and then they died by the roadside in the drenching autumn rains ; while Guise's light horsemen hung

<sup>1</sup> La Huguerye.

<sup>2</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.*

continually on their flanks, harassing the tired and dejected invaders, "giving them no rest by night or day." "If the King had kept the tenth part of his promises," said the Duke, "they would never have passed out of Lorraine." By the 10th of September it was reckoned that they had lost twelve thousand men. "Your Majesty would be horrified," Guise wrote to the King,<sup>1</sup> "if you could see their route; every day three or four hundred of them die or are left behind." In October, Bouillon's young brother, Jean de la Marck, died of fever, and Bouillon himself was too ill to move except in a litter;<sup>2</sup> the Germans laid the blame on Navarre for neither coming to meet them nor sending them an efficient representative; and the French complained of Dohna's incompetence and accused La Huguerye, with some show of reason, of being in the pay of the League.

François de Châtillon was in Languedoc when he received Navarre's order to join the auxiliaries with four thousand musketeers; he had no means of raising so large a force, and Navarre made no attempt to provide them; but Châtillon pledged everything he possessed to raise a small sum of money, and with the seventeen hundred men, which were all he could get together, he started on his march of five hundred miles.<sup>3</sup> He met the mercenaries near Chaumont in Champagne, and was

<sup>1</sup> In La Huguerye, vol. iii. p. 185, note.

<sup>2</sup> He died at Geneva in January, on his twenty-fifth birthday.

<sup>3</sup> *Discours de ce qui est passé en l'armée étrangère*, in the App. to Delaborde's *Coligny*, vol. iii.

shocked at their condition and at that of the surrounding country. The council supposed that he would have no objection to see Lorraine ravaged, but they were undeceived by his emphatic protest. "I am astonished," he said, "at this cruel and barbarous warfare. It is true that I have great cause for private animosity against the house of Lorraine, but my quarrel is not with trees and stones."<sup>1</sup> But he could only protest; he had no authority to control his colleagues, and by this time the demoralisation was beyond arrest. The army moved heavily down towards La Charité on the Loire, where they were met by new directions from Navarre; they were to turn and remount the river until they could find a ford, for the King was at Gien, a little lower down, and they were not to attempt to force a passage. But the troops were now leading their officers, and they thought only of filling the big waggons which they hoped to drag back to the fatherland heavy with French spoil. They objected that there was no likelihood of coming upon the King of Navarre at the source of the Loire: and the Nivernais and Champagne, the highroad of the German invader, had been ravaged so often by their countrymen that the provinces could hardly afford the army the means of subsistence. The wide rich plains of Beauce and the hidden treasures of the Chartres abbeys lured them on; they turned to the north-west and found themselves presently between the King's camp at Gien, and Guise at Montargis.

<sup>1</sup> La Huguerye.



Here Epernon offered to treat with the Swiss, who had been very unhappy since they had discovered that they had been enlisted under false pretences; they had been told that they were really to be employed in Henry's service against the League, and when they found the King in arms against them, they capitulated in a body<sup>1</sup> and were sent home. The Germans held on their way towards Chartres, and on the 26th of October, Guise was at dinner with his brother and his cousins, d'Aumale and d'Elbœuf, when he heard they were at Vimory, about nine miles from Montargis. He reflected for a few minutes, and then rose from the table and ordered his trumpet-major to sound the boot-and-saddle, as he meant to attack that night. Mayenne urged him to reflect on the disproportion of their forces. "The idea that does not occur to me in a quarter of an hour will not occur to me in a lifetime," he replied; and as the others still hesitated,—“Those who have no mind to fight, may stay at home.”<sup>2</sup> He surprised Dohna at midnight and routed a detachment of his reiters, not without some loss; a month later (24th of November) he fell upon them again at Auneau, close to Chartres, and inflicted a crushing defeat. Châtillon struggled to rally the disorderly mass and succeeded in prevailing upon a crowd of fugitives to turn and make a stand at La Bussière near Gien,

<sup>1</sup> *Discours de ce qui est passé*, etc. The King reproved them “fort aigrement de l'offense qu'ils luy faisoient contre leur serment de s'armer contre luy qui . . . estoit roy de France. A quoy les Suisses disent avoir répondu que c'estoit pour soutenir la couronne de France qu'ils avoient pris armes.”

<sup>2</sup> Davila.

but Bouillon ordered a general retreat, and the Germans, in hopeless confusion, buried their guns,<sup>1</sup> burned their waggons, and began to wander eastward, towards the Swiss frontier. Guise was eager to pursue them, but Henry hastily took steps to deprive him of a third success; he sent Epéron to make terms with the flying foe, and he, overtaking them at Marcigny in Burgundy, had no difficulty in persuading them to capitulate (8th December). The French were to surrender their colours, the foreigners to depart with their flags furled; and all were to engage never again to bear arms in France without the King's express permission. Châtillon alone refused to sign the convention; he would give up his colours, he said, to no one, except the King of Navarre, and he offered, if the Germans would make him their captain, to take them safely into Languedoc without the disgrace of surrender; they would have a day's start of Epéron and three days' start of Guise—what more did they want? Dohna was willing, but his men were not; they tried on the contrary to seize Châtillon, with the idea of holding him to ransom, "forgetting," says d'Aubigné, "that he was so poor that unless they sold his head to the enemy, they could have made nothing out of him." Châtillon, however, evaded them, and leaving his allies making merry<sup>2</sup> over their composition, he fought his way back

<sup>1</sup> "Dont estant adverty par quelques bons habitans dudit Chartres j'y envoyai incontinent et fis si bien chercher et fouiller partout qu'enfin se trouvèrent douze assez bons pièces, tant canons que culverines."—Cheverny, *Mém.*

<sup>2</sup> "Jouir à plein joye de leur composition et la solemniser par beaux festins . . . dans le camp du roy."—Brantôme.

to Languedoc, with two hundred companions, over roads deep in snow, with the royal lieutenants everywhere on the alert to arrest Coligny's son. "With enemies before and behind, confronted by a thousand perils, . . . he passed as a thunderbolt overturning all in his way." "Indeed," says Brantôme, who was a connoisseur in such matters, "I have heard some great captains say that it was one of the most remarkable of retreats."<sup>1</sup>

But while Châtillon and his two hundred men were chanting their psalm of deliverance,<sup>2</sup> the unfortunate Germans were discovering that they had rejoiced over their escape too soon; for Guise was obstinately bent on proving his contempt for the agreement made with them behind his back. "I shall be glad," he says, "if they pass through my government that I may attack and finish them without the least regard for the word given them." He had been constrained to disband his own troops for want of money, promising to pay their arrears before long, "if I have to sell my shirt to do it." But he did not let that stand in his way. He enlisted, "as a simple soldier," into the company of his cousin, the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, "that under his name and with his help I may finish off what is left of the reiters. For this purpose I am going to Montbéliard . . . and if I cannot fall in with them and they take a different way, I shall fight some of the Swiss heretics."<sup>3</sup> The Germans learned these

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, vol. vii. p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> "Et rendîmes grâces à Dieu de nostre retraite et fut chanté le psaume 124" (*Unless the Lord had been on our side, now may Israel say*).—P. de St. Auban *Mém.*

<sup>3</sup> Bouillé.

benevolent intentions and tried to frustrate them by going home by Bresse and Geneva, while Guise ravaged Montbéliard, but the Burgundian peasants massacred hundreds of them, and very few saw Germany again. Every lark in Beauce, it was said, had cost the Huguenots a man and a horse.

Guise wished to go to Paris when the campaign was over, but the King objected, and he went instead to Soissons, where he was joined by many of his friends, while Henry returned to the capital to hear the streets ringing with his rival's name. The victories over the reiters were magnified till they assumed the grandest proportions; they were celebrated in song<sup>1</sup> and pamphlet and sermon; the Pope, at Philip's request, sent the Duke a sword of honour, and Parma presented him with a helmet engraved with a complimentary inscription. Henry had received him at Gien "with a smiling and gracious air," but about the same time Guise wrote to Mendoza a clear and correct appreciation of his position.<sup>2</sup> "The King having suddenly realised what forces we have within this kingdom, and having likewise perceived the support we have beyond it, has tried to deprive us of both the one and the other, by every means except force, which he judged useless. . . . You know with what persuasions he has wrought upon the Pope, with what edicts his subjects have been nourished, and what offers have been made for the advancement of religion.

<sup>1</sup> There are three or four ballads on the subject in Leroux de Lincy's *Chants Historiques*: "Dictez moy, compagnon Lance, dictez moy, où allez-vous?" "Adieu les reistres, adieu." "O puissant duc de Guise" etc.

<sup>2</sup> MSS. de Mesmes; in Bouillé.

He means to be beforehand with us, to convict us of ambition and insolence if we take up arms, and if we do not, to wait till our means are overtaxed, our adherents scattered by his disfavour, and ourselves oppressed by the most careful and ingenious artifices he can invent, as during this war when people were afraid to join us and all those who did come had to serve at our expense. . . . Either we shall be driven to make open war on the King, or His Majesty will make war upon us so covertly, that we shall not be able to resist without appearing to put ourselves in the wrong and losing all our friends ; or else he will wait a while and begin when six times as much money will not place us in as good a position as we are in now. The King sends me word I am to go and meet him . . . and then I shall see what I shall have to do." From Soissons he went to Nancy to hold one of those family councils which never boded good to the royal house ; and a new Request was there drawn up and presented to Henry. It invited him to declare himself more openly in favour of the League, to accept the Council of Trent, to make war more resolutely upon the Huguenots, to order that no quarter should be given to any prisoner of war who refused to recant, and to dismiss certain persons at court who were suspected of heretical inclinations, a list of whom would be furnished. The first articles, especially the atrocious one about the Huguenot prisoners, were meant to alienate Henry from Navarre ; the last was directed against Epernon, the only man he could now trust. Henry promised to consider this so-called peti-

tion; he even feebly attempted to bring Guise to a better frame of mind, entreating him to break with Spain, and promising him in return all sorts of benefits, "with a world of extraordinary offers," which Guise could only compare to those made by Satan in the wilderness. "And I trust," he says, with the unconscious profanity of his day, "that I too shall be succoured by good angels."<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1588, the Parisian Leaguers had recommenced their plotting; influenced by the Duchess of Montpensier and by the preachers, they had decided to wait no longer for Guise, but to conduct the whole affair themselves, when the report that the four thousand Swiss who were quartered at Lagny were moving nearer Paris, threw them into a state of wild alarm. They believed that Epernon had at last induced the King to act, and they implored Guise to come and save them; he answered reassuringly, and sent some of his officers, who slipped into the town one by one. The Leaguers had undertaken to place twenty thousand men at his disposal, but Guise did not think very much of the municipal soldiers, and large numbers of his own people had already been introduced into the capital, and were lying hid in the dusky labyrinths of old Paris.

For more than three years,<sup>2</sup> Poulain the spy had kept the Government informed of the League's movements; he had sat at their councils and had

<sup>1</sup> To Mendoza; in Bouillé.

<sup>2</sup> Since Jan. 1585, Procès-verbal de Nicolas Poulain, *Arch. Cur.* vol. xi.



gone from them, carrying his life in his hand, to warn the King's ministers of plot after plot. But with the storm about to break upon him, Henry began to question the genuineness of the warnings, and to listen to Villequier, the governor of Paris, who told him that Poulain was in the employ of the Huguenots, and that his revelations were invented merely to make mischief between the King and Guise. Poulain prayed that he and half a dozen of the men he had named as chiefs of the League might be arrested; if he did not prove their guilt the King might hang him;<sup>1</sup> the King replied mildly that he did not doubt his honesty, but that he must see his way more clearly before going further. The Duchess of Montpensier's language had become so outrageous that she was ordered to leave Paris, but she did not go; she proposed, on the contrary, that her brother should come to Paris, "alone, in his doublet," to justify himself of the wicked designs attributed to him. The King was so much alarmed at the suggestion that he sent Bellièvre, one of his ministers, to Soissons to tell Guise on no account to come, but almost on the same day he let Epernon go to take possession of the government of Normandy, to which he had succeeded on the death of Joyeuse at the battle of Coutras in October. Bellièvre represented to Guise that the King did not doubt his attachment or believe the calumnies circulated against him, but he would prefer the Duke to postpone his coming to court for the present; the Duke declared that his

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, vol. x, p. 250.

services had been ill rewarded, that his reputation was dearer to him than his life, and that if evil-intentioned people, Protestants at heart, continued to attack him, he would do "whatever his zeal for his country and his faith might inspire." On the 5th of May Bellièvre brought the King this ambiguous reply ; on Saturday, the 7th, Poulain told the King that Guise was coming to Paris. "But I have forbidden it," said Henry. "And still he is coming," said the spy.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

The moment for which the Parisians had waited so long was at hand, but the signal was given neither in Soissons nor at Paris, but in Madrid. The delay that frightened and perplexed the Leaguers was caused by Philip ; left to himself Guise would not have moved at all ; as it was, he could not move till his employer gave the word. Philip's long preparations for the invasion of England were at last complete, and he was ready to take possession of the kingdom which Mary Stuart had bequeathed to him ; but he was afraid that France might interrupt his arrangements. He had therefore sent Guise three hundred thousand crowns in March, with orders to do something in May to occupy Henry's attention.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the second week in May, the Invincible Armada was ready to sail ;

<sup>1</sup> Procès-verbal, N. Poulain.

<sup>2</sup> "Si le projet en question s'exécute, le roi (Henry III.) aura les mains tellement liées qu'il lui sera impossible de venir au secours de la reine de l'Angleterre. C'est dans ce but que j'ai jugé apropos de faire retarder l'exécution du projet jusqu'au moment où la flotte serait sur le point de partir."—Mendoza to Philip, in Croze, *Lettres de Henri de Guise*, Appendix, deciphered and translated.

on Sunday, the 9th, Guise left Soissons at midnight with eight other gentlemen, and after riding hard for twelve hours, entered Paris by the Gate of St. Martin.

He went straight to Catherine's house, the Hôtel de Soissons. His unexpected appearance startled her out of her usual self-possession, and she trembled and turned pale as he entered ; but the Duke approached with an air of respect and submission.<sup>1</sup> She said she was glad to see him, but he would have done better to choose another time ; to which he replied that his enemies were blackening his character and he had come to defend himself. Catherine said no more, but while the Duke talked with her ladies, she sent Luigi Davila,<sup>2</sup> one of her gentlemen, to inform the King of Guise's arrival, and to say that she would bring him presently to the Louvre. Henry was in his cabinet with Villequier, Bellièvre, and a Savoyard, the Abbé del Bene, when the messenger arrived ; he sat for a while in silence, with his elbows on the table and his face hidden in his hands, and then, after having asked Davila a few questions, he desired him to say to the Queen-mother privately that he prayed her to put off coming as long as possible. He then sent for the Corsican, Colonel Alfonso Ornano.<sup>3</sup> "M. de Guise has arrived," he said, "although I sent him word he was not to come ; were you in my place, Colonel Alfonso, what would you do ?"

"Sire," said the Corsican, "do you count M. de Guise your friend or your enemy ?"

<sup>1</sup> Davila.

<sup>2</sup> Brother of the historian.

<sup>3</sup> L'Estoile.

The King answered by a gesture.

"I think," said Colonel Alfonso, "that I comprehend your Majesty's meaning. And this being the case, if you will honour me with the commission, without giving yourself any further trouble, I will lay his head at your feet to-day, or I will bring him to you in any spot you like to name."

Henry looked at his other advisers.

"*Percutiam pastorem et dispergentur oves*," said the priest softly.<sup>1</sup>

The King announced no decision; but he gave orders that the Swiss Guard was to be drawn up in the courtyard, and he hid Lognac, the captain of the Forty-five, with five men, in a closet adjoining the chamber in which Guise was to be received. His preparations were hardly complete before Catherine arrived in her sedan-chair, with the Duke in his white satin doublet and black mantle, walking bareheaded at her side. The news of his arrival had spread at once through the city and the streets were thronged with a crowd of rapturous adorers; the tradesmen made haste to shut their shops, the artisans left their workshops; a great roar of welcome floated in at the casements of the palace, where Henry sat waiting, with his weary eyes on the door of the closet where his Gascons lay hid. Guise went in, passing the French Guard in the courtyard; up the grand staircase, lined by the Swiss; through the hall, full of Scottish archers, and into the ante-room, where the

<sup>1</sup> "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."—St. Mark xiv. 27.

Forty-five were drawn up. He saluted Crillon, who commanded the Guard, but Crillon did not return his salute, and the Duke grew a little pale; he understood that he was counted a dead man.<sup>1</sup>

He bowed very low to the King. "What brings you here?" asked Henry, without raising his eyes. Guise answered that he had come to clear himself of the charges brought against him, and to beg the King to believe in his fidelity and affection.

"I told you not to come," said Henry.

"I did not understand," answered Guise, "that your Majesty would find my arrival so displeasing."

Henry turned sharply to Bellièvre. "Did you not tell him?" he asked. But when Bellièvre attempted to explain, he interrupted him. "That is enough," he said; and then he told Guise that he would prove his innocence best by seeing that his presence in the town occasioned no disturbance. The Duke then advanced to speak to the Queen, and Catherine hastily drew the King to the window and whispered that the streets were alive with people, and that it would be fatal to attempt any violence. There was a breathless moment; Henry wavered, and Guise, whom nothing escaped, seizing the instant of indecision, asked leave to retire. The King did not reply, but the Queen-mother assented quickly, and the Duke did not wait for further permission. No one went with him to the door; he passed alone down the wide staircase and into the open air, which he had never thought to breathe again. Upon his reap-

<sup>1</sup> Michelet.

pearance the enthusiasm of the crowd redoubled ; they rained down flowers on him from every balcony, they pressed to kiss the hem of his cloak, they brought their rosaries to be consecrated by his touch, they filled the air with cries of *Hosanna to the Son of David*. That night the guards were doubled at the Louvre gates.<sup>1</sup>

The next day he went to the palace again, this time not alone, but attended by a suite of four hundred gentlemen. He went with Henry to hear mass, and in the afternoon they had a long conversation in the garden of the Tuileries, while the Parisians sat on the ramparts overlooking the gardens to keep watch on their idol.<sup>2</sup> Guise represented that it was impossible to tranquillise the Catholics so long as the King surrounded himself with men whose attachment to the faith was so doubtful as that of Epernon and his brother, and turned his arms not against the heretics but against his own capital ; the King replied apologetically that though he did not pretend that the La Valettes were the equals of the Guises, either in rank or in merit, it had always been the custom for princes to choose their own favourites ; Epernon had never hindered him from making war on the heretics, and if he did he would certainly withdraw his favour from him. He added that he knew the plots against him were all formed by strangers, not by the citizens of Paris ; he meant to expel all such disturbers of the peace,

<sup>1</sup> Davila ; De Thou ; Amplification des particularités, etc. *Arch. Cur.* vol. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Mathieu.



and hoped the Duke would assist him. He showed a touching readiness to forget the past, professing the greatest confidence in Guise, and declaring his intention of "satisfying him in every particular," a curious reversal of parts; but when the Duke asked if he might bring the Cardinal of Bourbon to Paris, Henry answered with his bitter smile, "By all means, cousin; do we not know the proverb, *Love me, love my dog*?"<sup>1</sup>

The next day Henry ordered a house-to-house visitation to discover and expel the strangers in Paris, but his officers met with so energetic a resistance that they dared not proceed. The King declared that this time he would show that he was master in his own capital, and he ordered Biron to bring in the four thousand Swiss from Lagny, and at four in the morning of Thursday, the 12th, the Parisians were awakened by the music of fife and drum. Biron proceeded to post his men in different positions—nine hundred, for instance, in the Marché-Neuf, nine hundred in the Cemetery of the Innocents,—with strict orders from Henry himself not to molest any one, and on no account to fire. By some inexplicable oversight he did not secure that important position, the Place Maubert, between the University and the river.

This distribution of troops excited the utmost consternation in the town; the militant zeal of the citizens dropped to zero at the sight of the soldiers; "till ten o'clock," says a spectator, "the day was the King's; he might, if he liked, have arrested the Duke,

<sup>1</sup> There are two or three versions of this anecdote.

and the curtain would have fallen, the farce over." But the troops received no orders, after the first, which forbade them to stir; and as the citizens, peeping from behind their shutters, watched them standing "motionless, like iron statues," their courage returned. Nothing happened, no one was arrested, no one was threatened. Presently across the river there was a movement, the Latin Quarter was astir, the clerks and students began to pour, a black flood, out of their cloisters and alleys; and when Crillon at last attempted to repair Biron's error and led a detachment of his guards to the Place Maubert, he found it already occupied. As he had been absolutely forbidden to charge, he was obliged to retreat, and his retreat was the signal for the general revolt. The pavements were rapidly torn up, barricades were erected and chains drawn across the streets, the bells called the citizens to arms, and, inspired by the remembrance of a scene which had been witnessed in those same streets in the dawn of another summer morning, the cry was raised that the King was in league with the Huguenots, and that Coligny's son, burning to avenge his father's death, was at the gates of Paris. By noon the city was barricaded to within fifty yards of the Louvre, under the eyes of the troops who were mounting guard before the palace. Knowing themselves strong, the mob grew fiercer; the sight of the soldiers, still motionless in the midst of the confusion, irritated them, and they began to assail them with mud and stones; the men did not move, they were still waiting for orders. A musket went off by accident

in the Cemetery of the Innocents, and the enraged crowd fired in return upon the soldiers, killing several of them, and not a Swiss replied. In the Marché-Neuf a dispute arose and fifty were shot down.<sup>1</sup> When Crillon, d'O, and Ornano at last wrung from Henry leave to withdraw the men, it was too late ; they were blockaded at their posts and the officers were driven back with threats and insults. Then, and not till then, the loyal endurance of the Swiss (which stood a harder test upon a more awful day two centuries later) gave way ; exhausted by hunger and fatigue, abandoned by their officers to the mercies of the rabble, they threw down their arms and began in their broken French to say "France ! Nous Chrétiens !"

Nothing meanwhile had been seen of Guise. Very early in the morning, before the riot began, Catherine had sent Luigi Davila to his house to see what was going on there ; the Duke had walked with him in the garden, "taking him very obligingly by the hand," and had sent him back to the Queen with polite messages, not before he had given him an opportunity of observing that his house was well garrisoned and amply supplied with arms. A little later Henry sent Bellièvre to Guise to prevail upon him to leave Paris, promising that if he consented none of his partisans should be injured. The Duke was inclined for a moment to accept the conditions ; he could not hold the capital himself against four

<sup>1</sup> "Se jettèrent en foule sur lesdits Suisses qui ne se mirent en aucune défense," —Cheverny, *Mém.*

thousand regulars, he had no confidence in the Parisians, and he knew perhaps that the sixteen guns of the Bastille were loaded and trained on the town. Reckoning, however, on Henry's weakness, he decided to hold his ground; he would not leave Paris, but he undertook to go no farther than the street in which his house stood. At three in the afternoon the King was persuaded to make an attempt to rescue the Swiss who, though they had given up their weapons, were still standing as they had stood since daybreak. He sent Biron to Guise and entreated him to release the soldiers.

"Well, M. de Guise," said the old Marshal, "and what is all this about?" "You can see for yourself," Guise answered gently; "it is no doing of mine; I have not moved from this spot. The King has been badly counselled, the soldiers should never have been brought into the town; it is all that scoundrel d'O; he is not of the same trade as you and I, is he?" Then when Biron preferred his request, Guise readily assented to it; unarmed, with a small cane in his hand, he went from one post to another, releasing the Swiss, consoling them with kindly expressions of regret and sympathy,<sup>1</sup>—he spoke German very well,—till a way was made for them to pass, and they were led by St. Paul, one of Guise's officers, to the Louvre. When he came to the Marché-Neuf and saw the wounded and the dead, he was much moved.

<sup>1</sup> "Les Suisses se lamentoyent grièvement d'avoir esté si cauteleusement deceuz et que leurs corps avoyent esté menez à la boucherie et leur renommée mise à l'encamp."—*Discourse Véritable*.

"They were wrong," he said to Biron with a sigh, "to kindle a fire they could not put out." The plaudits of the people broke out afresh at his generous courtesy, and they shouted *Vive Guise*, till the Duke, doffing his large hat, answered, "Gentlemen, it is enough, it is too much ; now let me hear you cry, *Vive le roi !*"

At five o'clock Catherine set out bravely in her chair to begin negotiating, but Guise was not amiable, and she left him, promising to return. She went back to the Hôtel de Guise next day, and the conference lasted for some hours. Guise's conditions were hard, and she discussed each one at great length ; she was still talking fluently when a messenger came in and spoke a word in the Duke's ear. "Ah, madam," he exclaimed, turning to Catherine, "you have ruined me ; while you have been amusing me here, the King has escaped us !" Catherine replied with creditable coolness that she did not believe it ; if it was so, it was a sudden resolution taken since her departure ; but she had in fact been gaining time. All the gates of Paris were held by the Leaguers except a small one opening into the Tuileries garden, which appeared to have been overlooked, and of which the King kept the key. Alarmed at hearing that a furious mob of monks and students was threatening to attack the Louvre, Henry had decided to save himself by flight, and about five in the afternoon of Friday, the 13th, while Catherine was arguing with Guise, he sauntered on foot, "with as cheerful a countenance as on the brightest day of

his life," with a few attendants, as he often did, to look at his stables, which adjoined the garden, and there mounting in haste, with as many of his suite as could find anything to ride,<sup>1</sup> he fled, escorted by the Swiss troops and Crillon's regiment of guards to Chartres, pausing in his haste to utter a savage curse<sup>2</sup> upon the city which he was never to enter again. The next day the Bastille surrendered to Guise, its sixteen guns still loaded ; the barricades disappeared, the town was so orderly that the recent tumult seemed a dream. On Sunday, for the first time for many months, the preachers exhorted their hearers to be quiet and obedient, and the next week those municipal officers who had remained faithful to the King were dismissed and others elected in their places.

Guise had so far met with only two rebuffs : the President of the Parliament, Achille de Harlay, refused to recognise the new government, and his attempt to conciliate Sir Edward Stafford, the English ambassador, had met with a most discouraging reception. He was very anxious that the incident should be placed in the best light before the foreign courts, and he also saw an opportunity for laying Elizabeth under an obligation to him, and he sent Brissac therefore to the ambassador's house, near the Place Maubert, on the Quai des Bernardins, to offer him protection against the mob. The Englishman

<sup>1</sup> "Cherchans des chevaux et en trouvant à grand peine, nous montâmes tous, la plupart sans bottes."—Cheverny, *Mém.*

<sup>2</sup> "Jurant par plusieurs fois qu'il feroit que le père droit à son enfant, un temps advenir, 'Voylà où fut Paris.'"—*Le Martyre des deux frères*, Arch. Cur. vol. xii. p. 67.



thanked the Duke for his courteous offers, which, had he been a private person, he said he should have most gladly accepted; as an ambassador, he could place himself under the protection of no one but the Sovereign to whom he was accredited. "And I may remind you, sir, that I am not accredited to the city of Paris but to the King of France." Brissac hoped he would explain to Her Britannic Majesty that the Duke had been forced by the machinations of his enemies to defend himself; he had discovered a conspiracy against the city, and the Town Hall was full of gibbets intended for the most respectable citizens. Stafford replied that he could not undertake to interpret the Duke's designs to Her Majesty,—he could only relate the facts; that was indeed a sad story about the gibbets,—he supposed there would be no difficulty in producing them to content the incredulous? Brissac hinted that the Parisians were very ill disposed towards the Queen's representative on account of "the recent cruelty" shown to the Queen of Scots; Stafford objected to this description "of that just act." The envoy then asked if it were true that the house was full of arms, and at that Stafford laughed. "If you put that question to me privately, as your uncle's old friend," he said, "I might answer it; as English ambassador I have nothing to say." "As a friend, then," said Brissac, "tell me if you are well armed." "As a friend," returned Stafford, "I do not mind telling you that I have no weapons but the law of nations and the public faith." "You will certainly be attacked."

"In that case I must defend myself as best I can."  
"But at least," cried Brissac, "you will take the precaution of barring your door." "That too is impossible," said Stafford gravely. "An ambassador's doors stand open to all; mine shall not be closed till the mob you speak of is in sight." This unsatisfactory conversation was reported to Guise, who nevertheless took care to ensure the Englishmen's safety, considering that he was bound in honour to protect the foreigners so long as he was master of the town.<sup>1</sup>

Guise could not still believe that Henry would take no step to regain his position, and he lost no time in seizing Vincennes, St. Cloud, Charenton, and Corbeil, and in writing to Parma and Mendoza to be ready if he needed aid. "I do not know," he wrote, "if they will attack us or not, but if they do, see that you help us in time." The King had issued a letter, sadly apologetic in its tone, to his provincial governors, on the subject of the recent disturbances, and Guise immediately sent them all his own version, according to which nothing could have been more irreproachable than his conduct. "I was with the King," he says, "all Tuesday, now in his closet and now in the Tuileries. . . . He asked me if I had any soldiers in Paris, and I told him I had not a single soldier within a hundred miles of the town. . . . On Thursday while the troops were being posted, I was in bed and asleep, not so much as dreaming of any disturbance." He goes on to describe how at the close of this day, "resplendent with the infallible protection of God,"

<sup>1</sup> De Thou; and *Amplific. des faits*, *Arch. Cur.* vol. xi.

he had made every possible effort to restore order, and he observes, "I cannot (being a man) help confessing that I felt a certain satisfaction, and my happiness would have been complete had it but pleased the King to witness a little longer my respect and filial obedience towards him . . . for my power that day was limited only by the fear and the love of God and by the desire He has implanted in me to act rightly." He adds that had he liked he could have arrested the King a thousand times. He wrote to the King also a letter of excuse, which had rather the character of a reproach, in which he protests his inviolable attachment to the throne, and reminds the King of the trouble he took to calm the riot and to save "your Majesty's Swiss." To this Henry made no reply, but he received a deputation from the Parliament of Paris, and told them that he was willing to pardon the Parisians if they would return to their duty, and he announced his intention of convoking the States at the end of the year, of choosing a Catholic successor among the princes of the blood, and of introducing financial reforms. He resolved also to throw his unpopular favourite to the wolves, and when Epernon came from Normandy to Chartres (22nd May), the King told him he must give up his governments of Normandy, Saintonge, Metz, and the Angoumois. Epernon consented to resign Normandy, provided it was not given to one of his enemies, and it was bestowed on Montpensier, who had always been a royalist; but he declined to part with the others, perhaps with Henry's secret approval, and left suddenly for Angoulême,

without taking farewell of any one. At Angoulême he was in easy reach of the Huguenots. Henry then moved to Rouen, and proceeded to treat once more with the League, assisted by the indefatigable Catherine.

On the 21st of July the Parliament of Paris registered a new edict, which was drawn up much on the lines of the edict of Nemours; but while it accorded a general amnesty for the past, it obliged all the King's subjects to renounce upon oath "all leagues contrary to his interests, whether within or without the kingdom." The government of Picardy was given to d'Aumale, Guise's cousin; of the Lyonnais to Nemours, his half-brother; his brother the Cardinal was, through the King's influence, to be appointed Legate of Avignon; his faithful servants the Archbishop of Lyons and Claude de la Châtre were to receive, the one a cardinal's hat and the other a marshal's bâton. It was clear to all that it paid better to be the King's enemy than his friend. They even persuaded Catherine to propose his return to Paris, but this he refused. "Alas, my son," said she, "is it possible that you have grown so unforgiving? Your disposition must be completely changed." "I think it is, madam," he answered lightly. "But what can I do? That wicked Epernon, who they all say did me so much harm, must have spoiled my temper."<sup>1</sup>

He returned to Chartres on the 23rd of July, and there he received Guise, whom Catherine presented to him. The Duke's manner was constrained; he

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

appeared "penetrated with reverence for the King"; but nothing could have been more gracious and easy than Henry's reception of him. When the Duke knelt to kiss the royal hand the King raised him and embraced him with an expression of the most affectionate regard; but every now and then, under that velvety softness, there was a sudden glitter of something cold and hard. One day, for example, at a great banquet he invited the Duke to drink with him.

"Whom shall we pledge?" he asked.

"It is for your Majesty to choose," replied Guise.

"Then, cousin," said Henry, "let us drink to our good friends the Huguenots."

"Very good, sire."

"And to our good barricaders of Paris," Henry added; "we must not forget to pledge them too."

Guise drank the toast smiling, but soon after he withdrew, troubled and thoughtful; it was not an amusing jest.<sup>1</sup> Four days later he wrote to Mendoza in evident perplexity: "It is not easy in the short time we have been here to judge of the state of affairs. . . . The beginning has been fine and the reception of great good cheer, and extended to the least of our people. If we might go by appearances and by what every one says . . . we should apprehend a great change for the better. . . . In short we cannot judge whether it is an extraordinary dissimulation,—one greater than a French mind can carry out,—or a

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

marvellous mutation, and as it were a new world. . . . When I penetrate further into the depths of the heart I will let you know.”<sup>1</sup>

All these weeks both Guise and Henry were thinking much of the Armada. “If the Spanish fleet could only be defeated,” Henry said to Stafford, “all good things would follow.” The *Pride of the World*, the *Terror of the North*, had sailed in May, had been driven back by contrary winds, and had put out to sea again the second week in July. Then, at the end of August, the news came to Paris that Medina Sidonia had won a great victory over the English fleet, and Mendoza posted to Chartres to tell the King and Guise, shaken out of his Spanish gravity by the joyfulness of the tidings. Henry listened with polite interest to his tale, and then informed him, with visible satisfaction, that he had received a different and a more authentic account, and before long there was no room to doubt; the *Pride of the World* was a wreck, a derision, a phantom vanishing from the eye of man into the misty northern seas. Four days after Mendoza’s arrival, Henry showed him three hundred galley slaves, who had been sent to him from Calais, the rowers of a Castilian vessel which had gone ashore on Calais sands. Mendoza at once claimed them as his master’s property, and appealed to Guise to support him; he would not, he said, have them displayed at the French court as evidence of the Spanish loss. While Francis of Guise was defending

<sup>1</sup> In Bouillé.



Metz in 1552, a Moorish slave belonging to the imperial general, Don Luis d'Avila, had stolen a horse and escaped into the city. The Spaniard asked Guise to return them, and the horse was sent back at once, with the courteous intimation that the slave could not be restored, because having set foot on French soil he was a free man.<sup>1</sup> Henry of Guise was not himself a free man, and he pressed Mendoza's claim. But the ruin of the Armada had given Henry a little courage. Urged by Biron and Nevers, he refused the joint demand of his two enemies, and the Turks were sent home to the Sultan, each one with a crown in his hand.<sup>2</sup>

## VII

The States had been convoked ostensibly to assist the King in arranging the matter of the succession and various reforms in the Government administration, but in reality as a court of appeal, which Henry hoped might restore something of his authority. The Leaguers had, however, been busy long beforehand securing the return of their own candidates, and they had succeeded, as far as the clergy and the Third Estate were concerned; the nobles were divided. The deputies began to arrive at Blois in September. On Sunday the 9th of October the King, the Court, and the Estates communi-

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, *Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 416.

<sup>2</sup> Palma Cayet, *Chron. Novenaire*. Cf. the story in De Lurbe, *Chronique Bourdelaise*, p. 47: A merchant had brought a cargo of negroes to Bordeaux to sell as slaves, and the Bordeaux Parliament declared them all free,—“La France, mère de liberté, ne peut souffrir aucun esclave.”

cated together, and on the 16th the Assembly was opened.

Since the day of the barricades Guise had had ample time to reflect on the maxim that a victory is sometimes more costly than a defeat. He had been reluctant to defy the King openly by going to Paris, for it was clear to him that he had nothing to gain by that decisive step; if he triumphed, he triumphed for Philip; if he failed, he alone bore the penalty of failure; whether he failed or triumphed, he would be condemned by all honourable men. The fear of offending Philip, and the nobler fear<sup>1</sup> of exposing those in Paris who had espoused his cause to dangers he did not share, drove him to the capital against his own judgment, and though all had gone well with him, beyond his most extravagant hopes, there were some who perceived,—perhaps he perceived it himself,—that the day of his supreme victory was the most disastrous of his life. The King's misfortunes had produced almost immediately a revulsion of feeling; it was one thing to lament, to denounce the vices of the sovereign,—it was another thing to trample royalty under foot. Many of his friends considered that Guise had been “charmed by the importunity of this *rascaille de peuple*” into “forgetting what he was”;<sup>2</sup> from that time the best men among his adherents began silently to fall away from him, and there were many like the advocate,

<sup>1</sup> “Le Duc étoit épouvanté lui-même de la grandeur de l'attentat qu'il méditoit mais il ne croyoit pas devoir abandonner des gens qui ne se trouvoient exposés que pour avoir embrassé son parti.”—De Thou, vol. x. bk. xc. p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Pasquier.

Pasquier, who loved the Duke but followed the King.

And if many left him because he had gone too far, there were others who turned against him because he had not gone far enough.<sup>1</sup> The fanatics and the fortune-hunters had boasted they would carry him to Rheims and shut up "Brother Henry" in a monastery, but no one knew better than Guise how idle was such talk.<sup>2</sup> To put out his hand to grasp that crown, more splendid than any to which his ancestors had aspired, would raise friends for Henry out of the ground. There were many between Guise and the throne,—Condé's brothers, who were Bourbons and Catholics; Lorraine, the head of his own house; and Lorraine's son, who was the grandson of a French king,—and not one of them would stand aside to let Guise go his way. Till Henry's death he could never hope to be more than a mayor of the palace; but if he could reign through Henry during his lifetime, he might make his position so strong that it would not afterwards be easily shaken. It was no doubt his best chance, but his most furious partisans could comprehend his patience as little as they could imitate it. They blamed him for having permitted the King's escape, and Guise was infinitely weary of trying to keep them in good humour, of giving his hand to his friends of the market and the workshop, of caressing "that unbridled beast" which

<sup>1</sup> "Il y en a beaucoup qui quittoient le party de la Ligue lorsqu'ils virent qu'ils avoient failly à prendre Sa Majesté le jour des Barricades, qui estoit le premier et principal dessein des Ligueurs."—Nicolas Poulain, Procès-verbal.

<sup>2</sup> See his reply to Duplessis Mornay, in Nevers, *Mém.*

fawned upon him now, and now ventured to show him its teeth. Nor was he any longer on perfectly harmonious terms with his own family. He had never vouchsafed his confidence to any of them ; they knew nothing of his plans beyond what he chose to communicate as the necessity for action arose ; the Duke of Lorraine had been much hurt by the readiness Guise had shown to crush the Germans at any convenient spot, whether the Lorraine territories suffered or not ; Nevers had at last perceived that his ally's designs tended rather to overturn the monarchy than to maintain the Church ; Mayenne, his half-brother Nemours, d'Aumale, Elbœuf, and the rest of them, were tired of being led, as Henry declared Guise led all the men of his house, "like bulls by the muzzle." "The Duke had always behaved," says the younger Tavannes, "as though his kinsmen had been created to no other end than his service, and they now began to say among themselves that if they must have a master they would as lief it were the King as another." His brother Louis, the Cardinal of Guise, was the only one of whom he was still quite certain. Insensibly, too, those who had followed him longest and most loyally began to perceive the nature of that absorbing passion for power which devoured him. Of all the innumerable men and women who loved Henry of Guise, there was not one whom in return he loved ; he worshipped at no altar but that of his own immeasurable ambition, and he would not have hesitated to sacrifice his dearest friend at that unholy shrine. There was something monstrous in his cold, unswerv-

ing egoism ; its contact chilled at last the warmest attachment. In proportion as the better class of his followers fell away from him, he was more closely surrounded by the corrupt and the dishonest ; there followed him to Blois a host of disreputable hangers-on, ruined men who saw in him the only hope of repairing their shattered fortunes ;<sup>1</sup> and Guise, in spite of his superb and confident air, was himself a desperate man. At the end of his resources, almost at the end of his wonderful patience, he resolved, says Pasquier, to play double or quits ; he determined, at all hazards, to force the King virtually to abdicate in his favour. Mendoza had a midnight interview with him, at which he sought to dissuade him from going to Blois, but Guise, while admitting the risk, was bent upon facing it. "They cannot kill me," he said, "except in the King's cabinet, and he is not likely to keep any plot so quiet that I shall not hear of it. In any case I must go." And so to Blois he went, to stake his life against the crown of France.

The Estates met in the hall of the castle, as they had done at their last meeting, eleven years before ; Guise, as Grandmaster of the Household, sat on a stool at the foot of the throne, facing the assembly, and it was on him and not upon the King that all eyes were fixed. Henry opened the proceedings with that perfect dignity of speech and manner which was his to the very end. He hoped that the Estates would assist him in remedying

<sup>1</sup> "On ne voyait autour du duc Guise que tout ce qu'il y avait de gens ruinés et des plus corrompus dans le royaume."—De Thou, *Mém.* p. 629.

the miseries of the country, he paid a tribute to his mother's services, he declared his intention of maintaining the Holy Union and of appointing a Catholic successor, and alluded to the impossibility of exterminating heresy unless the necessary funds were provided ; but his eloquent truisms were pointed here and there by phrases pronounced with peculiar emphasis, which fell upon startled ears ; Guise was seen to flush with anger as he listened. "God is my witness," said Henry, "how freely I have convoked this assembly ; I have not intrigued against the liberty of the deputies, I have not corrupted the electors. Had I done so I should blush for my conduct, as those should blush who have resorted to such unworthy means, if there be any such before me now. . . . Do not imagine that I alone am responsible for the afflictions of the country. Part of it is due, I confess, to my negligence, but I am about to order matters so that those who have been blind enough to depart from their duty and their obedience will be constrained to recognise their error. . . . By my Edict of Union I have forbidden expressly every association formed without my authority, all raising of troops and of money both within and without my kingdom ; and I now declare that those who persist in such criminal intelligence in spite of my prohibition shall be counted guilty of high treason ; it is a precaution which I owe to myself. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Over the King's speech the duel began. It was to be printed, and the Archbishop of Lyons, one of

<sup>1</sup> De Thou.



the most active of the Leaguers, told the King flatly it could not be printed as it was delivered ; there were in it, he said, some piquant phrases which had probably escaped His Majesty, and which could not be unsaid, but it was undesirable that all the kingdom should learn what darts had been thrown at them. The King first refused to alter a word, then by Catherine's advice he yielded ; the sentences were softened and the first impressions withdrawn ; but as Guise had stopped the King's printers without waiting to learn his decision, these were not numerous. The deliberations were interrupted by the news that the Duke of Savoy had suddenly seized the Marquisate of Saluzzo, and had sent the last French garrison out of Italy.

So flagrant an insult roused the Second Estate out of its selfish indifference ; that a small state like Savoy should have dared to offer it was the most irrefutable proof that had yet been given of the degradation to which Henry and Guise, between them, had reduced their country. For a moment the nobles were willing to set everything else aside in order to prove to Europe that France could not yet be totally ignored ; Guise was suspected of having connived at the attack, and they turned in fierce indignation upon the man who was said to have sold the last of the French conquests in Italy to buy himself an ally. As a matter of fact they wronged him ; nothing could have been farther from the Duke's wishes ; he was quite disconcerted by the intelligence. " This affair of Carmagnole," he wrote to his confidant, Mendoza,

"I fear that it will upset all my intentions and designs, and that the King, my master, may take the opportunity of coming to an agreement with the heretics, to make war upon M. de Savoy. . . . Consider and reflect if there is no means of arranging matters with M. de Savoy, that we may still pursue our pursuit." And again, four days later, he wrote : "If it had not been for this I had felt certain . . . that we should obtain from the Estates the confirmation of the Edict of Union . . . with an express declaration of open war of extermination on the heretics. . . . Now our designs are so upset by this new affair that already a number of deputies are ready to consent to a general peace with the Huguenots."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding these doubts, the First and the Third Estate outvoted the Second, and instead of demanding war with Savoy, they requested the King to confirm the Edict of Union and to declare it "a fundamental law of the kingdom." "He refused at first to do so," says Guise, "with many bitter words, and hence we judge that he is thinking of peace with the Huguenots ; but finally being hard pressed by the Estates, who were otherwise ready to separate, he promised to swear the edict before discussing anything else." Two days after the opening, Guise was able to tell Mendoza that "at last, in full assembly, our Edict of Union has been sworn . . . all the hindrances and difficulties made by the King being surmounted, though I was four or five times on the point of

<sup>1</sup> In Bouillé, vol. iii.

breaking it off.”<sup>1</sup> Ten days later he reverts to the trouble about Saluzzo. “It causes so strange an embarrassment that it almost ruins the sequence of our designs, alienating from us the goodwill of a good part of the Catholics, and leading them to think of other things than the pursuit of this war.” He found himself in fact obliged to clear himself from the odious accusation brought against him, and he did so with remarkable dexterity. At his bidding, the clergy and the Third Estate suddenly withdrew their opposition to any conflict except one with French heretics, their former decision was reversed, and the Duke stood discovered as the most ardent or at least as the most powerful patriot of them all.

The Estates then demanded that the taxes should be lowered ; they required the imposts to be reduced to what they were when Francis I. came to the throne (1515). The King asked for time to consider, and was told he must decide at once or the deputies would go home ; and in three days he agreed, on condition that they found the money for his household expenses and for the two wars. They next pressed him to declare Navarre incapable, as a relapsed heretic, of succeeding to the crown ; Henry pleaded that he should first be invited once more to renounce his errors, but the Estates replied that he had been summoned to return to the right way often enough, and as they “could not change their decision” they hoped His Majesty would acquiesce in it without

<sup>1</sup> In Bouillé.

delay. This time Henry contrived, though with difficulty, to defer his submission.

With each concession offered by the King the Leaguers grew more insolent. In vain he appealed to them to "consider his quality and not to prostrate entirely the authority of the crown"; in every sitting of the clergy and of the Third Estate, insults rained upon him; on every holy day the preachers assailed him from the pulpit, until he hardly ventured to show himself in the streets. He implored Guise at last to moderate the language of his adherents; but the Duke replied coldly that he had no power to interfere.

As the year darkened into winter, the gloom of hatred and mistrust deepened over the town. The King began to absorb himself more deeply in devotion; he built a row of cells above his chamber, in which to lodge a number of Capuchin monks, and he spoke of giving up the reins of government to his mother and to Guise while he attended to his own soul. As the Lorrainer saw the crown almost within reach he grew passionately eager to grasp it;<sup>1</sup> he became irritable and impatient, and he threw off the semblance of respect which he had hitherto been careful to maintain. "He who was formerly so infinitely restrained in his behaviour, and who was more practised in dissimulation than any gentleman in France, began to allow himself to be lured out of the way by the baits of fortune."<sup>2</sup> He asked the King

<sup>1</sup> "Il toucha déjà, ce lui semble, du bout du doigt la souveraine autorité."—*Rél. de la mort des Duc et Card. de Guyse, Arch. Cur.* vol. xii. p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> L'Estoile.

for a provost and a guard of archers, such as suited his position as Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, reminding Henry that he had enjoyed that privilege when, as Duke of Anjou, he held that rank. The King demurred; the circumstances, he said mildly, were not quite alike, for he was a king's brother. Guise retorted that he had only given him a parchment office not worth keeping. Catherine implored Henry to pacify him; and her son replied that the dispute would be settled in two or three days.

Guise had not come blindly to Blois; warnings poured in upon him, as they had once poured in upon Coligny. At Chartres a friend reminded him of the Saint Bartholomew, and how Henry had then bidden them "get the Admiral killed at any cost, because he had played the king"; and what had Guise done? Pasquier advised the Duchess of Nemours not to let both her sons, the Duke and the Cardinal, go to Blois together, for had not the absence of Montmorency, at the time of the Massacre, saved his brothers' lives? His cousin, Christina of Lorraine, assured him the King would kill him. "Madam," said he, "he does not dare." Schomberg warned him not to drive Henry to desperation. "After all," he answered, "I don't see that I can very well be taken by surprise. I know no man who, if we came to blows alone, would not go equal shares in the peril, and I always go well accompanied. My suite follows me to the door of the King's room, and at a sound they could be with me." And he wrote to Mendoza that he had plenty of friends,

“and if an enterprise is begun against me, I shall end it more roughly than I did at Paris.” One day (30th November) the pages who waited on the staircase and in the courtyard of the castle, while their masters were with the King, quarrelled, and one of them was killed. Guise, who was talking to Catherine, heard the uproar and believed that he was about to be assaulted, but he continued his conversation without the least change of expression, “sitting gazing into the fire, his eyelids lowered that no one might read his thoughts.”<sup>1</sup> When they told him that the Cardinal of Bourbon’s pages had begun the fight by attacking his, he said under his breath, that they had more sense than their master. About a fortnight before Christmas the uneasiness of his friends increased and they urged him anew to leave Blois. “As things are,” he returned, “nothing shall make me move; if I saw Death coming in at the door I should not go out by the window.”<sup>2</sup>

On Sunday, the 18th of December, the Court was *en fête* in honour of the recent marriage of Christina of Lorraine to the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, and during the entertainment the King called aside almost the only friends who had not been driven from his side,—the Marshal d’Aumont, the Marquis of Rambouillet and his brother, and the Corsican Ornano; and they all agreed that it was time to make an end. Rambouillet would have preferred to arrest the Duke and have him tried for treason, but it was doubtful if any court would convict; in the end they decided

<sup>1</sup> Davila.

<sup>2</sup> Deposition of the Archbishop of Lyons, *Arch. Cur.* vol. xii.



to assassinate him on the following Friday.<sup>1</sup> They invited Crillon to assist, but Crillon declined ; he would kill the Duke in a duel with pleasure, he said, but he was a gentleman and a soldier, and assassination was no fit work for a man of his quality.

As Christmas drew near Henry redoubled his devotions ; he left Guise and the Estates to do what they would, while he fasted and prayed ; they began to regard him already as a monk. On St. Thomas's Day the Duke went with him to vespers ; Henry knelt, immersed in prayer, while Guise sat reading a Huguenot satire against the King, careless of the sinister petitions which were rising to Heaven at his side. He showed Henry the pamphlet when they came out of church and pressed him to read it, assuring him he would find it very amusing ; the King replied quietly that he did not care to read Huguenot writings, but when he was alone, he was seen by one of Guise's spies to dash his hat on the ground, quivering from head to foot in an inarticulate frenzy.<sup>2</sup> He arranged to go on Friday, the 23rd of December, to Cléry, to pay his devotions at that famous shrine ; the day before he had a long conversation with Guise in the castle garden. No one heard what passed, but he told his half-sister, Diana, in his physician's hearing, afterwards, that the Duke had said that he would prefer to resign the office of Lieutenant-General, and that he had refused to accept the resignation, at least till the next

<sup>1</sup> Navarre was married on the 18th of August, 1572, and the first attempt to assassinate Coligny was made on the following Friday.

<sup>2</sup> Palma Cayet.

day. "I told M. de Guise that night would bring counsel," he said, "but I knew very well what I had to do next day."<sup>1</sup>

That evening it was announced that the King had changed his mind and instead of going to Cléry was going to La Noue, a hermitage on the borders of the forest, about six miles from the castle ; he meant to start early so as to get back in time for his council at eight ; his coach was ordered to be ready at four in the morning, and on account of this early start the keys of the castle, which Guise, as Grand-Master, always kept at night, were left with the King. Henry desired the members of his council to be in the council-chamber about seven, as there was much business to get through before Christmas ; the Duke was not in the habit of coming to the meetings, but on this occasion he was specially requested to be present. The King then ordered d'Aumont, Rambouillet, d'O, and Ornano to be in his cabinet at six next morning, the Forty-five to be in his chamber at five, and he told his valet du Haldes to wake him at four, without fail. Du Haldes set the alarm for that hour ; and at midnight the King went to bed.

On Friday morning du Haldes knocked at the door of the Queen's room at four o'clock ; one of her women came and asked what he wanted. "Tell the King it is four o'clock," said he. "But he is asleep, and so is the Queen." "Then you must wake him up, or I shall knock so loud they will both wake. It is his order." The King, however, had

<sup>1</sup> Miron's *Relation*.

not slept at all ; and he rose at once and went to his cabinet, where du Haldes and de Termes, another valet, were awaiting him. He took the keys of the little cells above his apartments, where his Capuchins were to be lodged, and locked du Haldes into one of them ; the valet thought he was mad and was much frightened. Henry then went down again to his room, where the Forty-five were assembling, and as each man arrived, he was taken upstairs and locked into one of the cells ; the King creeping stealthily with them up and down the dark staircase, dimly lighted by the taper de Termes carried. As soon as the members of his private council had gathered in his cabinet, he let the guardsmen out and brought them down to his room, begging them to tread softly lest they should disturb his mother, whose apartments were below. He then informed them that he had suffered enough, and that either the Duke of Guise or he must die that morning. The Forty-five assured him gaily that he could count upon them, and one of them tapped him encouragingly on the shoulder. "Cap de Diou, Sire," he said, in his Gascon patois, "I will kill him for you."<sup>1</sup> Eight of them had daggers, and these were stationed with Lognac, their captain, in the King's chamber ; a dozen more were placed in the adjoining room called the Old Cabinet, and orders were given to Nambu, the porter, to let no one pass in or out. Two of the royal chaplains were then called into the oratory, a door of which

<sup>1</sup> Deposition of the priests, Claude de Bulle and Estienne Dourguin, *Arch. Cur.* vol. xii.

opened into the cabinet, and were desired to pray for the success of an enterprise in which the King was engaged ; and so they did. Half an hour later the King sent to tell them to pray again, for the hour was at hand ; but in the interval they had peeped into the cabinet, and had seen two of the Gascons dancing together,<sup>1</sup> one with a naked dagger in his hand, and had heard them say that when it was done they would throw him out of the window ; the priests guessed that they spoke of Guise, and returning horror-stricken to their devotions they prayed that the King's heart might be changed. Henry meanwhile was wandering to and fro in an agony of suspense ; he begged the guardsmen to take care the Duke did not hurt them. "He is very tall and strong, and I should be sorry if you were hurt."

The Duke had rooms on the ground floor, in the east wing of the castle. When he went to his room on Thursday evening, his cousin Elbœuf was waiting to see him, to warn him that some mischief was certainly on foot. Guise laughed and told his cousin to go to bed, and touching the breast of his doublet, "You see," he said, "I am armed in innocence." He went out again and did not come in till two o'clock, when he found five notes of warning on his table ; he thrust them carelessly under his pillow and went to sleep. At four his valet awoke him to call his attention to the unusual sounds that were heard in the

<sup>1</sup> "Il apperçut Loignac et le Guast qui dançoient ensemble, iceley Guast tenant en sa main un poignard tout nud."—Dep. of Est. Dourguin.

courtyard, but the Duke reminded him that the King was starting early for La Noue ; he went to sleep again, rose soon after six, and at half past seven was on his way to the council-room, with Péricart his secretary. He was so hurried that he omitted to say his usual prayers.<sup>1</sup>

The hall in which the council met was really the ante-chamber of the royal apartment, and it was also used as a dining-room ; it opened into the King's chamber, and that again opened into the Old Cabinet. On ordinary occasions a gentleman going to see the King left his suite in the ante-chamber, but when the council was sitting there, the suite waited at the foot of the staircase. Guise, who rarely went to the council, had forgotten this arrangement ; but Henry had noted it carefully as his only chance of separating him from his attendants. The Duke was astonished to find the Scottish Archers drawn up on the staircase and landing. "This is unusual," he said sharply, "why are you here?" Larchant, the captain, replied that they were waiting to ask his good offices with the King ; their wages were in arrears, and they would be obliged to sell their horses if they were not paid. Guise promised to do what he could for them.

In the council-chamber he found his brother the Cardinal, the Archbishop of Lyons, d'Aumont, Rambouillet, d'O, and two or three more. The King was not there. They stood talking for a little while, and presently Guise, who was dressed in grey

<sup>1</sup> *Le Martyre des deux frères.*

satin, too lightly for the wet December morning, said he was cold ; so they lighted the fire and he stood shivering beside it. He presently sent his secretary to bring him his handkerchief and his comfit box, which he had forgotten, and meanwhile St. Prix, the King's first groom of the chamber, offered him some prunes. Péricart went out, but when he came back with the silver-gilt shell he was not allowed to pass in again ; he had to send in the box by the porter. As he stood wondering what to do, for the incident aroused the gravest suspicions, the Duke's son, the Prince of Joinville, passed him on his way to breakfast with the King's nephew, the Grand-Prior ; Péricart tried to stop him but the boy ran by too quickly ; and the secretary, fearing the worst, hurried to warn Madame de Nemours and to burn his master's papers.

The council had not waited long when the King sent Révol, one of his secretaries of state, to summon the Duke to speak with him ; the secretary turned deadly pale. "What is the matter with you, Révol?" cried the King. "How pale you are ! You will spoil the whole thing,—rub your cheeks, Révol, rub your cheeks." Révol went through the king's room into the council-chamber and told the Duke very softly that the King was asking for him. Guise rose, bowed to his colleagues, tossed the prunes on to the table, and with his gloves and his silver shell in his left hand, and his mantle folded on his arm, passed into the next room, the door being immediately shut behind him. The guardsmen saluted him respectfully on his entrance and followed



him across the room ; when he was a yard or two from the door of the Old Cabinet, he turned suddenly to look at them, and in a moment Montféry's dagger was in his breast. They all pressed in upon him, stabbing him in the throat, the side, and on the temples ; his sword was entangled in his cloak and he could not draw it, but wounded as he was, and blinded by the blood from the cut on his forehead, he dragged three of his assailants right across the room and dropped at the foot of the King's bed, gasping, " Oh, I am betrayed ! My God, have mercy upon me ! " The King, hearing the sound of the fall, came fearfully to the door of the cabinet and looked out from under the curtain. " Is it done ? " he asked ; and if the Duke's fine ear were not yet deaf to every mortal sound, he must surely have caught that faint, awful echo of his own voice, floating to him across the space of sixteen troubled years. He was not quite dead, for when the secretary Beaulieu came to search his pockets, there was a slight tremor in his limbs. " My Lord," said Beaulieu, " if there is any life in you yet, ask pardon of God and the King." There was no answer but a long deep sigh. They covered him with a piece of tapestry and some one twisted a handful of straw into a cross and laid it on his breast ; and presently Henry crept out to look at the corpse. " At last I am King," he muttered ; and then, as his eye wandered over the stately form,— " I did not know he was so tall."

Those who had remained in the council-room had sprung to their feet, startled by the sound of the

scuffle. The Cardinal of Guise cried, "They are murdering my brother," and the Archbishop of Lyons tried to go to his help, but the Marshal d'Aumont stopped them. "Do not stir, gentlemen," said he, "the King has business with you too." They stood together till Lognac came from the inner room and said that the Duke was dead, and had been "very hard to kill." The ecclesiastics were arrested and imprisoned, and the King then went to tell Catherine what he had done. She was in bed suffering from a bad attack of gout, and though she had wondered at the noise overhead no one had told her what was happening. Her son entered and asked her how she was. "I feel better," she said. "So do I," said Henry; "this morning I became King of France; the King of Paris is dead."

The two priests had meanwhile stolen into the cabinet; the Forty-five had trooped downstairs laughing and joking,<sup>1</sup> and no one was there but a valet cleaning the floor of the outer room with a mop and a bucket of water, who asked if they would like to see the Duke's body; he drew back the covering, and as they looked upon the pale face whose habitual serenity the violence of death had not disturbed, they said a hasty *De Profundis*. It was his only funeral rite.

The King could not decide upon the Cardinal of Guise's fate; he was afraid to let him go, and hardly less afraid to kill a priest. Others shared his repugnance, and when at last he resolved that the Cardinal must die he had difficulty in finding an executioner.

<sup>1</sup> Deposition of Michel Marteau, *Arch. Cur.* vol. xii.

Two of the Forty-five refused to undertake the office ; a third, du Guast, had scruples, but was bribed to overcome them. At eight on the next morning (Christmas Eve) du Guast entered the little room where the Cardinal of Guise and the Archbishop of Lyons had spent a miserable night, and said, "Sir, the King sends for you."

"For both of us?" asked the Cardinal.

"No, Sir," said du Guast, "only for you."

As he was leaving the room the Archbishop whispered hastily in his ear, "Think of your soul." He was cut down in the passage, and the bodies of the two brothers were burned together. "Well, d'Amours," said Henry of Navarre to his chaplain, when he heard of it, "We can go and preach on the other side of the Loire now,—M. de Guise is dead." <sup>1</sup>

In Paris the consternation produced by the news was succeeded, as soon as it became evident that the King was incapable of following up his crime with the necessary energy, by uncontrollable fury. The whole city went into mourning, the churches were filled day and night by audiences who responded with sobs and imprecations to the preachers' denunciations of the crime ; the portraits of the two brothers, " martyrs for Jesus and for the public weal," were exposed upon the altars ; and the Sorbonne declared the King's subjects released from their oath of allegiance. On New Year's Eve, an unending procession carrying lighted torches, wound its way

<sup>1</sup> D'Amours to Henry, *Bulletin du prot. français*, vol. i. p. 280.

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through the dark streets, extinguishing them on the threshold of the cathedral, with the solemn cry, "So may God extinguish the House of Valois." Henry discovered too late that his rival was more formidable in death than in life.

AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ





## AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ

### I

THE Venetians used to hold as a maxim of state that a change of religion is always followed by a political change, and the early history of that complex movement which we call the Reformation afforded them a striking illustration of their theory. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the religious revolt with which it opened had already become the most disturbing element in European statecraft ; it had cleaved asunder the German States, the Swiss Cantons ; in northern Europe it had materially contributed to overturn one throne and to establish another ; it had shaken the authority of the greatest ruler who had held the Imperial sceptre since the days of the great Hohenstauffen. Long, however, after the political significance of the Reformation had elsewhere obscured or effaced its religious meaning, in France it still retained its primitive character. At the death of Francis I. in 1547, the French Reformed, numerous though they then were, had still no organisation, no leaders ; at the death of Henry II. in 1559, they were still loyally adhering to the rule of non-resistance laid down for

them by Calvin, who held that rebellion against lawful authority must bring reproach upon the Gospel. What did it matter, he asked them,<sup>1</sup> how much they endured, if the name of God was honoured and the number of the faithful increased by their patience? What did it matter how thick the dead lay heaped on the battlefield if the position was captured at last? Inspired by his stern contempt for suffering, they agreed that it mattered very little, and after thirty years of intermittent but ever-increasing persecution,<sup>2</sup> they were still passing silently from the torture-chamber to the stake. But even before the death of Henry II., that turning-point in French history, there were signs that the loyalty and submission which had borne so heavy a strain were slowly yielding to another sentiment; the day of passive resignation was already drawing to a close, when, in 1552, Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné was born.

His father, Jean d'Aubigné, Judge of the Seigneurie of Pons, was one of the many adherents gained by "the Religion" in the western province of Saintonge. Ten years before Agrippa's birth, Antoine de Pons and his cousin, the Seigneur de Mirambeau, had returned from Ferrara, whither they had gone in the suite of the Duchess Renée, and where, like the Duchess, they had become disciples of Calvin. It

<sup>1</sup> "Quelqu'un me demandoit conseil s'il ne seroit licite de résister à la tyrannie dont les enfans de Dieu estoient opprimez; je respondi . . . qu'il valoit mieux que nous périssons tous cent fois que d'estre cause que le nom de l'Evangile fust exposé à tel opprobre," etc.—Calvin, *Lettres françaises*, vol. ii. p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> Under Francis I., in twenty-three years, 81 persons suffered the extreme penalty for heresy in France; under Henry II., in twelve years, 97 were executed.

was probably from them that Jean d'Aubigné learned the new doctrine, which was carried rapidly throughout the province by the wandering preachers, who found their best hiding-places among the rough seafaring folk who dwelt on the marshy creeks and islets of that low, black shore, where Palissy, the first French naturalist, searched for fossils,—whence Champlain sailed to found Quebec.

Of the d'Aubigné ancestry nothing is known, for the documents connecting the d'Aubignés of Saintonge with the noble Angevin house of that name, long accepted as indisputably genuine, are now pronounced by competent critics to be rather clumsy forgeries, produced in the interests of Madame de Maintenon, Agrippa d'Aubigné's granddaughter. The d'Aubigné pedigree was a vexed question in the sixteenth century, and the lapse of years has not assisted to solve it ; it did not greatly interest Agrippa, and he only tells us that his father was a gentleman of good birth and small means.<sup>1</sup> His mother, who died in giving him birth,<sup>2</sup> was Catherine de l'Estang, daughter of the Seigneur of Landes-Guinemer, near Blois ; his birthplace was the Hôtel Saint Maury, near Pons.

Jean d'Aubigné early resolved to give his son a good education, and at four years old Agrippa was provided with a Parisian tutor, who was famous for his method of teaching four languages at once.

<sup>1</sup> "Nature . . . me fist naître  
Pauvre de biens et noble toutefois,  
De race vertueuse."—Elegie, *Œuvres Comp.* vol. iii.  
ed. Réaume et Caussade.

<sup>2</sup> *Ægre partus* : hence his name.

His little scholar soon learned the elements of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; he tells us that at six he could read them all, and that at seven, with some help from his tutor, he translated the *Crito*.<sup>1</sup> It may be that he exaggerates his childish attainments, but it must be remembered that instances of precocious learning were much more frequent in the sixteenth century than they are now,<sup>2</sup> and the period of childhood much shorter. Jean d'Aubigné's second wife disliked her step-son, and objected to the expense of his "exquisite nurture," so when Agrippa was eight years old, his father took him to Paris and put him to school there. It was not long after the attempt to overthrow the government of the Guises, known as the Conspiracy of Amboise, which had failed, as so ill-organised a scheme was bound to do, and had been punished with a ferocity which sickened the Guises' own partisans. As the travellers rode through Amboise, on their way northward, they came suddenly upon a hideous memorial of the affair, in which Jean d'Aubigné himself had been indirectly concerned,—the heads of its chief, La Renaudie, and some of his comrades set up on a high gallows at the foot of the castle hill. The sight shook the Huguenot's habitual composure. "They have beheaded France!" he cried; and as Agrippa, amazed at the unusual emotion in his father's face, pressed closer to him, "My son," he said, laying his hand

<sup>1</sup> Sa Vie à ses Enfants.—*Œuvres Comp.* vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> But in our own day, John Stuart Mill began Greek at three, and had read, among other authors, by the time he was eight, Herodotus, Xenophon, and the first six dialogues of Plato.—*Autobiog.* pp. 5-10.

solemnly upon the child's curls, "both your head and mine must fall, if need be, to avenge our leaders. My curse upon you, if you shrink." The incident left an indelible impression upon the boy's mind, as well it might: he never forgot that he had been dedicated, in the presence of those awful witnesses, to their unfinished task.

He spent the next two years in Paris in the house of Mathieu Béroald; and when the first civil war broke out (1562) he fled with his tutor from Paris to take refuge in Orleans, the headquarters of the Reformed army. Agrippa grieved at having to abandon all his little treasures, whereupon Béroald took his hand and reproached him gently with his weakness. "My friend," said he, "do you not feel the joy of losing something, young as you are, for His sake who has given you all?" During their journey the fugitives were arrested and brought before the Inquisitor, Antoine de Mouchy, at Courances, and Agrippa seems to have found his tutor's lofty consolation somewhat inadequate, for he wept when his "little well-gilt sword and silver-mounted belt" were taken from him. The captain of the troop carried his youngest prisoner to his room and assured him that his companions were doomed to the stake and that he would do well to recant before it was too late; and in a moment the little Huguenot had dried his tears and was defying the enemy. "I am more afraid of the mass than of the stake," said he. The stern reply charmed the soldiers, and they proceeded, with a levity little in keeping with the situa-

tion, to inquire if the young candidate for martyrdom could dance. Agrippa, never reluctant to display his accomplishments, was quite ready to show them that he could dance very well; a violin was quickly procured, and the child, in his white satin dress brodered with silver, executed a *gail-larde* with a grace and gaiety which enchanted his captors. His firmness was not put to the final test, for the prisoners bribed the gaoler and escaped to Montargis, where the Duchess Renée of Ferrara received them with great kindness and took special notice of Agrippa, who sat on a stool beside the great lady, "discoursing with her upon the Scorn of Death." From Montargis they made their way to Orleans, where Jean d'Aubigné was commanding under Saint-Cyr. When the plague attacked Orleans, killing thirty thousand people, Madame de Béroald was one of its first victims; Agrippa too fell ill, and he attributes his unexpected recovery to the devoted nursing of a faithful servant. During his father's absence in Guienne he took advantage of Béroald's preoccupation to neglect his lessons and spend his time in the delightful, but not very improving, society of the soldiers who were preparing for the impending siege; and on d'Aubigné's return he was shocked to hear a very bad report of his son's conduct. He said nothing to Agrippa, but sent him by his steward a mechanic's dress, bidding him look through the shops and choose a trade for himself, since he had abandoned the path of learning and honour,—a reproof which cut the little sinner to the heart.



The assassination of Francis of Guise ended the first war, and Jean d'Aubigné was one of the negotiators of the peace which followed. He had been badly wounded during the siege, and as soon as the peace was signed (March, 1563) he left Orleans, entrusting Agrippa again to the care of Béroald, who was now a professor in the University of Orleans. He kissed his son at parting, a mark of tenderness so rare that the child wondered at it, and desired him to be faithful in friendship, eager for knowledge, bold in defence of the truth, and, above all, to remember Amboise; but Agrippa did not understand till long afterwards that he had received his father's last farewell. Jean d'Aubigné died a few weeks later, regretting only that his boy was not old enough to fill his place in the ranks; he left nothing but his good name behind him, and Agrippa was now dependent on the small estate of Landes-Guinemer, which he had inherited from his mother.

His guardian, a relative of his father, left him another year in Orleans and then sent him to finish his education at Geneva. Agrippa was of the opinion that he needed no more schooling, and went to Geneva most unwillingly, and certainly the freedom he had enjoyed at Orleans was not a fair preparation for the discipline of Calvin's College. The routine of the place was hateful to him, and he was continually in trouble with the authorities; he was only saved, he says, from a lasting distaste to the classics by the gentle influence of Loyse Sarrasin, the daughter of the burgher in whose house he lived.

She was a year or two older than himself, "and so wise that, had her sex permitted, she might have lectured in public;" she knew Greek and Latin like her mother-tongue, "and perceiving in me some spark of love towards her which she might turn to good account, she forced me, by scoldings and reproaches, to work at the Greek themes she set me." But in spite of all that Loyse could do for him his idle, mischievous habits continued; the rector, Theodore de Béze, liked the boy and often saved him from the consequences of his escapades, but his other masters were less lenient, and at the end of two years he left the college, "without the knowledge of my relations," he says, leaving it uncertain whether he ran away or was expelled. From Geneva he wandered to Lyons, where he spent some months studying mathematics and astrology with an Italian charlatan. "He made me think," says Agrippa, "that he was a magician, but when I inquired further of the science, he told me that he knew by my physiognomy and disposition that I should never be any good at it." Notwithstanding this poor opinion of his pupil, the adept read and explained to him the Fourth Book of his great namesake, the Key of Solomon, and other works of the kind; but when it came to drawing the magic circles and beginning the invocations, the disciple's heart failed him and he refused to go on. At last one day he found himself unable to pay his reckoning and was ashamed to face his landlady empty-handed; and finding himself at evening on a bridge over the Saône, it occurred to him that a

plunge into the stream would be the quickest way of ending his troubles. Having however been, as he observes, well brought up, he remembered in time that "no action should be performed without prayer," and paused accordingly to utter a brief petition, the last words of which—"life eternal"—impressed him so strangely that, abandoning his rash design, he prayed instead that a way might be shown him out of his troubles. Scarcely had he ended when, glancing across the bridge, he saw a gentleman and his servant approaching, and recognised his cousin, the Sieur de Chilleau. This fortunate encounter delivered him from his embarrassments.

When the third civil war broke out (1568) d'Aubigné was living with his guardian in Saintonge. The first rumour of a renewal of hostilities had set the whole province astir; and from every corner of it men were marching to range themselves under Condé's banner. Agrippa was now sixteen and burning to begin a military career, but his guardian considered him still too young, and enforced his opinion by locking up his troublesome ward and taking away his clothes. Undaunted by these obstacles, the prisoner tied his sheets together and escaped through the window, to hurry barefoot in his shirt after a small company of horse which had just passed his guardian's house on its way to the general mustering-place at Saintes. When he succeeded in overtaking them, the captain at first threatened to send him home again, but afterwards relenting, gave him an old cloak and mounted him behind one of his men. A

league farther they came upon a troop of Catholics going to Angoulême, and at the close of the skirmish which followed, the new recruit found himself the happy possessor of an arquebus and a powderhorn ; and at Jonzac the officers provided him with a suit of clothes. "However I may fare in the war," said he, "I cannot come out of it much worse off than I go in."

The third civil war lasted nearly two years, and a worse school of morals for the young soldier could hardly have been devised. The first war had been in reality a war of religion, and the Huguenot leaders had done all in their power to keep the fact before their men ; there was no plundering of villages, no cruelty inflicted on the peasants, and the troops were themselves so anxious to maintain a high standard of virtue that it was, says La Noue,<sup>1</sup> "a very orderly disorder." In Condé's camp at Vassoudun, it was observed with astonishment that there were no dice, no oaths, no drinking ; and morning and evening, public prayer was offered and the music of the psalms filled the air. But when Coligny was congratulated upon so wonderful a state of things, he answered that it was good while it lasted, but it could not last very long. "I have commanded the infantry a good while," said he (he had been Colonel-General), "and I know them well ; it will be a case of 'young, a hermit ; old, a devil.'" "We laughed," says La Noue, "and thought no more of it, but experience proved him a prophet ;" and by the time that Agrippa enlisted the prophecy had

<sup>1</sup> La Noue, *Mém.* chap. vi., ed. Petitot.

already been fulfilled. Even Coligny's pitiless justice failed to maintain discipline among his hungry, ill-paid troops, and "a great many of those who carried arms . . . deserved to be called brigands rather than soldiers."<sup>1</sup> Nor was it only in morals and discipline that a change had taken place. It was with a heavy sense of the calamity involved that Frenchmen, for the first time in a hundred and fifty years, took up arms against Frenchmen; but the emotion which thrilled the hostile forces when first they beheld friends and kinsmen drawn up against them passed quickly away; the combatants not only became indifferent to bloodshed, but they learned to love it, and the revolting cruelties practised on both sides during the third civil war revealed something of the hideous demoralisation which was fully laid bare at the Saint Bartholomew.

D'Aubigné was offered a place, at the outset of the war, in the Prince of Condé's household, but he took offence at the terms in which the invitation was presented, and roughly desired the gentleman who proposed, in the courtier's phrase, to "give him to the prince," to content himself with giving away his own dogs and horses. He regretted too late the "rustic independence" which had prompted him to reject his only chance of advancement, for there was now no career open to him but that of the soldier of fortune. He readily learned what he calls the tricks of the trade, to swear, to gamble, to brag, to talk of vice; "at this time," he says briefly, "for me, God was dead." The Huguenot army suffered terribly

<sup>1</sup> La Noue, *Mém.* chap. vi., ed. Petitot.



from hunger and cold during the winter campaign, and the boy had his full share of hardships ; shivering in his threadbare suit, he lay out in the frozen Poitevin marshes with d'Asnières, he tramped the dripping forests of Perigord with Piles. Always ready for a fight or for a foray, his reckless humour soon earned him a certain reputation ; at seventeen he fought his first duel, at eighteen he commanded a disorderly little troop of *enfants perdus*, and he was soon promoted to be ensign in d'Asnières' first company. A sharp attack of fever then brought him to the edge of the grave, and his sickbed was sorely troubled by the remembrance of his sins ; visions rose before him of plundered villages and starving peasants ; and when, contrary to his expectation, he recovered, he was a changed man. " My illness restored me to myself," he says ; " I found God again."

By the summer of 1570 both parties were tired of the fruitless conflict, and peace was signed once more at Saint Germain. " The Huguenot wars," said the Venetians, " are a kind of quartan fever." With the signing of the peace, d'Aubigné's occupation was gone, and he resolved to go to Blois to take possession of his maternal inheritance, Landes-Guinemer. There he was received at first as an impostor, but he succeeded in proving his title ; and while living on his small estate, " king of my little hamlet," and pretending to enjoy a quiet life,— " O happy those who know," he says, " our little terrestrial gods!"—he fell madly in love with Diana Salviati, the daughter of his neighbour, the Seigneur de Talcy.



His suit was encouraged for a time, although the Salviati were Roman Catholics and connections of the Medici, but after the Saint Bartholomew it was rejected, on account of his religion. It was under the sway of this first passion that he wrote the series of love-poems which he called "Spring."

Ronsard, of course, was his model<sup>1</sup>—Ronsard, who was worshipped by his generation as no other poet perhaps has ever been worshipped, whom Montaigne judged the equal of the ancients, whose approval Tasso rejoiced to have won. D'Aubigné's first poem, written when he was sixteen, was an ode to the master, in which he figures the lawless cannibal in the remotest ends of earth softening at that beloved name; and to the close of his life (when his glory who sang so melodiously the transitory sweetness of mortal things had already waned and passed) he dwelt with pride on his acquaintance with the poet, and on the kind words M. de Ronsard had deigned to say about his verses. But it was easier to admire Ronsard than to imitate him. D'Aubigné's tragic genius found herself ill at ease in a garb of odes and sonnets, and his stanzas are often harsh and awkward, marred by far-fetched conceits and incongruous metaphors; yet there are among them some that are distinguished by their tenderness and simplicity, and here and there he has lines in whose melancholy grace we hear the clear echo of the master's voice. The rendering of

<sup>1</sup> "Nul alors ne mettait la main à la plume qui ne le célébrât par ses vers. Sitôt que les jeunes gens s'étaient frottés à sa robe, ils se faisaient accroire d'être devenus poètes."—Pasquier.

French lyrics into English is at best a thankless task, but the following verses may serve as an illustration of d'Aubigné's early work.

## ODE XXXVII

## I

WHERE goes yon prisoner with his head so high ?<sup>1</sup>  
*They lead him forth to die.*  
 How, facing Death, is he of such good cheer ?  
*He held his life not dear.*  
 What cruel judge pronounced that verdict grim ?  
*'Twas Love that sentenced him.*

## II

What was the heinous fault against him proved ?  
*Too well, alas, he loved.*  
 For this black crime what form shall vengeance take ?  
*They have prepared the stake.*  
 O hapless wretch ! O judge most obdurate !  
 O lamentable fate !

## III

But stay,—what bond holds him a captive there ?  
*A tress of shining hair.*  
 Whence comes the flame by which enwrapt he dies ?  
*From his sweet lady's eyes.*  
 O gentle love ! O torment, joy confessed !  
 O lover greatly blest !

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<sup>1</sup> "Où va cest enchesné avec ce brave port ?

*On le treisne à la mort.*

Comment est-ce qu'ainsi joyeux il s'y convie ?

*Il n'aymoit pas sa vie.*

Quel juge si cruel haste son dernier jour ?

*L'impitoyable Amour."*

*Œuvres Complètes, vol. iii.*

## ODE XVI

## I

You say I have a fickle mind,<sup>1</sup>  
 I own not always your command ;  
 But tell me, can you look to find  
 A firm foundation in the sand ?

## II

You flout my suit at every turn ;  
 Then by my coldness you're offended ;  
 'Tis not the way of fires to burn,  
 Unless occasionally they're mended.

## III

My passion's warmth you cannot doubt,  
 But you are ice and I am flame ;  
 If when we meet, the flame goes out,  
 Not I but Nature is to blame.

## IV

You mock my tears when fast they fall ;  
 You scold me when they cease to flow ;  
 My love you value after all,—  
 You miss your pastime when I go.

## V

Discouraged, I renounce the prize,  
 Yet pause again ere you upbraid me ;  
 'Tis your own work that you despise,—  
 I am what you yourself have made me.

<sup>1</sup> " Vous dites que je suis muable,  
 Que je ne sers pas constamment,  
 Comment pourrois-je sur le sable  
 Faire un assuré fondement ?

Vous babillez de ma froidure,  
 Et je suis de feu toutefois ;  
 Le feu est de telle nature,  
 Qu'il ne peust brûler sans bois."

## TO DIANA

COME, my Diana, let us make<sup>1</sup>  
A garden very trim and fair ;  
And you shall walk as mistress there,  
And I will toil with spade and rake ;  
And there for our entire delight  
A thousand blossoms shall unfold,  
The pansy and the marigold,  
The crimson pink, the lily white ;  
There not a thorn shall mar the rose,  
And every sugared fruit that grows  
Shall ripen when the flowers are done ;  
Betwixt us we'll divide the rent,—  
Your share shall all be pure content,  
The tears, the labour, mine alone.

With the small sum which d'Aubigné was able to obtain from his estate, he proceeded at once to raise a company with which to join La Noue in the Netherlands. He was in Paris, waiting for his commission, when the wedding of Henry of Navarre and Margaret of Valois was celebrated, but three days later he wounded a sergeant of the guard who attempted to arrest him for having been engaged as second in a duel, and was consequently obliged to leave the capital. To this accident he owed his absence from the city during the massacre which followed hard on that crimson bridal. He did not return to Paris until the pause in hostilities which succeeded the

<sup>1</sup> " Nous ferons, ma Diane, un jardin fructueux  
J'en seray laboureur, vous dame et gardienne,  
Vous donnerez le champ, je fourniray la peine,  
Afin que son honneur soit commun à nous deux."

*Hécatombe à Diane, xx.*

peace of La Rochelle (July, 1573), when he was invited to enter the service of the King of Navarre.

Henry of Navarre and his cousin Condé, at the time of the massacre, had been offered their choice between the Bastille and the mass; and they had reluctantly accepted the latter alternative. Catherine had designed by this means to discredit the princes—especially Henry of Navarre—hopelessly in the eyes of the Reformed, but she soon became aware that she had missed her mark. The conversion had been too hasty, too openly forced; whatever he chose to call himself for the time, whatever he was at heart (and what that was who could say?), Jeanne d'Albret's son was the born leader of the Huguenots; the head of the House of Bourbon was the rallying-point of the insurgents. Catherine was too shrewd to lose sight of the fact, and for four years the prince, who was nineteen at the time of the massacre, was kept under the closest surveillance, lured into every indulgence which could distract his thoughts from politics or weaken his moral fibre, alternately mocked and threatened, humiliated and amused. It was a miserable position for any man; for one of heroic mould it would have been intolerable. There was not much that was heroic about the young man whose cool head, keen eye, and rare courage enabled him to thread his way safely through the snares that beset his path; but although he repaid himself for the trials of captivity by accepting with a good grace the consolations which captivity afforded, he never altogether forgot that he was not born to be

Catherine's dupe or Guise's tool ; under the careless laughter, the ready friendliness of the Béarnais, there lay already, only half-dormant, the inflexible will, the measureless energy, which were one day to be the salvation of France.

He had associated himself not long after the massacre, with the King's brother, the Duke of Alençon,<sup>1</sup> whom his mother mistrusted as much as she mistrusted Navarre, in forming plans of escape, and early in 1574 he had contrived to communicate with La Noue and also with Montgomery, who had landed from Jersey (whither he had fled after the Saint Bartholomew) in Normandy. It was suggested that Agrippa d'Aubigné would be a suitable agent to employ in these dangerous negotiations, and he was accordingly offered a post in Navarre's household. Jean d'Aubigné's name was so well known in Paris that Henry did not dare to receive Agrippa directly into his service, and it was therefore arranged that he should first attach himself to Fervacques, one of the Catholic gentlemen who had been placed by Catherine about her son-in-law's person, receiving later on, ostensibly at Fervacques' request, the appointment of equerry to the King of Navarre. Fervacques was starting for Normandy, whither an army had been despatched under Matignon, principally to take Montgomery prisoner ; and Navarre desired him to take d'Aubigné with him, hoping that during the campaign the latter might find some way of serving the Huguenot chief. D'Aubigné refused at

<sup>1</sup> Francis of Valois, Catherine de' Medici's fourth son.



first, but afterwards consented to go, provided he was not required to take the usual oath of fidelity, and by the end of May they were encamped before Domfront, where Montgomery was making his last stand. With Fervacques' connivance, d'Aubigné managed one night to communicate with the count and offered to arrange his escape if the matter were placed in his hands, but Montgomery refused; short of powder and short of provisions, he still hoped to hold the place until his German auxiliaries arrived. But by noon next day, Matignon's guns had battered a great breach in the crumbling walls, and the castle only held out four days later. Transported with joy, Catherine carried to her son's sickbed the news that his father's murderer (for so she affected to regard Montgomery) was at last in their power; but Charles turned his face to the wall and answered wearily that neither that nor any other mortal thing concerned him now.

Montgomery's capture<sup>1</sup> closed the campaign, and d'Aubigné returned to Paris, to spend two years in the Valois court, with its dainty refinement and its vicious ferocity, its high-bred manners and its vilely depraved mind. He followed his master to balls and tourneys, he engaged in the usual number of duels and midnight adventures; he wrote masques and ballets which were much admired by the court, and his poetical repute gained him admission to the King's little Academy, which met twice a week to recite verses and to discuss intellectual problems. Neither the goodwill of the King nor the talent of the poet could

<sup>1</sup> He was executed on the 26th June, 1574.

induce Catherine to look with a favourable eye upon Navarre's new equerry. She suspected the tendency of his sonnets, she disliked his Huguenot name, and worst of all, a report had reached her that it was no fault of d'Aubigné that Montgomery had not evaded her at the last moment. Coming suddenly face to face with him one day, she observed significantly, "I heard of you in Normandy; you will be just such another as your father." "May God grant me that grace," returned the young man; he could not keep back the retort, though he expected to pay dearly for it. He had, however, found a protector where he would never have sought one. Henry of Guise, beginning warily to play his own dangerous game, had conceived a liking for the brusque young provincial, whose bitter tongue made him a match for the sharpest wits of the capital, who was "as ready with his sword-thrusts as with his epigrams"; and the audacious Huguenot was more than once indebted to the head of the Catholic party for his good-natured and timely intervention.

On the arrival of the new King, Henry III., from Poland, in the autumn of 1574, Catherine's severity relaxed, and Navarre and Alençon were granted a larger measure of freedom; but every token of discontent reported or invented by Catherine's spies produced fresh alarm and fresh restrictions. Alençon had, however, a faithful ally in his sister Margaret, Navarre's wife, and with her help he made his escape in September, 1575, and joined the Malcontents. Navarre, who was more closely guarded than Alençon,

lingered still in Paris, soothed into resignation partly by the caresses of Madame de Sauve and partly by the hope of the lieutenancy-general which Catherine held out to him, and there was a moment when d'Aubigné believed with dismay, that his prince's heart was "barred like his chamber window." Early in 1576 the equerry, sick of inaction, had made up his mind to leave Paris without waiting for his master, when on the eve of his departure, as he and Armagnac, the groom of the chamber, were sitting by Henry's bed, they heard him murmuring to himself the last verse of the eighty-eighth psalm, "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*" To the listeners it seemed a heaven-sent opportunity, and prompted by his companion, d'Aubigné drew the curtain and urged on the prince the step they had so often contemplated. "Sire," said he, "is it true then that the Spirit of God is striving with you still? You grieve for the absence of your friends and faithful servants, and they too sigh for you. . . . But you have only tears in your eyes, they arms in their hands; they are fighting your enemies, you are serving them; they fear none but God, you tremble before a woman. . . . What makes you choose to be valet here when you might be master yonder?" Henry was in the right mood, and he yielded to d'Aubigné's persuasion; the plot was quickly arranged, and on the 3rd of February, 1576, he made his escape under cover of a hunting party, with a few companions. They arrived at Alençon on the 6th, and there they were joined in three days

by two hundred and fifty gentlemen ; and three months later Henry was formally readmitted into the Reformed Church.

## II

The peace signed by the King and the Third Party in May, 1576, was broken by the demand for religious uniformity made at the Estates of Blois at the end of that year ; the resumption of hostilities which followed was quickly followed by the Peace of Bergerac (September, 1577). With the exception of the foolish campaign known as the Lovers' War (1580) this peace lasted till 1586, when the League forced the King to revoke his edicts of pacification. But whether the Huguenots were actually at war, or standing on their defence during periods of nominal peace, d'Aubigné found plenty of congenial employment, and numerous occasions of displaying the courage and resource of which, it must be confessed, we are permitted to hear a good deal.

Henry of Navarre's position as the recognised leader of the Reformed was less perilous but not much less difficult than it had been during his captivity in Paris. Among his followers were both Catholics and Huguenots, each section with its inveterate prejudices, its rancorous jealousies, and its particular claims, which were always being thrust upon his attention. Many of them had drifted accidentally into the ranks of the party and were likely to abandon it again as easily ; others had joined him in the hope of bettering

their political fortunes, deliberately intending to leave him if they were disappointed ; and there were others again who prided themselves on the irresponsible egotism which they mistook for independence. His little court was crowded with restless young nobles whose services he could neither dispense with nor requite, and who did not admit his authority a moment longer than it suited them to do so. When Sully,<sup>1</sup> for instance, then a lad of nineteen, acted as second in a duel, contrary to Navarre's express command, and was reproved rather sharply for it, "I answered him haughtily," he tells us, "that I was neither his subject nor his vassal, and threatened him in my turn with leaving his service."<sup>2</sup> Guienne swarmed with Catherine's spies ; she had secret agents everywhere, quick to profit by the pique or passion of a moment, to hold out the hand of reconciliation to the penitent rebel, to remind him that on the other side of the Loire was a real sovereign with adequate rewards to bestow, no King without a kingdom like the Béarnais. The strength of the party lay, of course, not in these inadhesive particles but in the men who had definitely consecrated their lives to the cause which Henry represented ; but even here he was unfortunate ; for the best of them mourned his immorality as a reproach to the faith, and the most earnest of them questioned the sincerity of his

<sup>1</sup> Maximilian de Béthune, Baron de Rosny, afterwards (1606) Duke of Sully. I have called him throughout by his best-known name.

<sup>2</sup> In quoting from Sully's *Memoirs*, for the sake of clearness I have exchanged the second person plural of the original for the first person singular.—Sully, *Economies Royales*, vol. I. Petitot.

profession. All Henry's fine tact and temper were needed to hold his party together, and no one tested them more severely than d'Aubigné. From the hour when they rode westward together through the frosty night, "with death and shame behind them," till the day eighteen years after, when Henry IV. made his triumphal entry into his capital, d'Aubigné's fortunes were bound up with those of his prince; but their relations, though always intimate, were never harmonious. D'Aubigné did not possess one of the qualities which make a man easy to live with; he was as quick to take offence as he was careless of giving it, he was cursed with an ironical humour which neither interest nor discretion ever restrained, and he prided himself on the savage sincerity which disdained to consider time, place, or person. Yet though he often quarrelled with his master, Navarre never allowed the parting to be final; for with that unerring knowledge of character which helped to make Henry IV. one of the first diplomatists of his time, he recognised in his intractable equerry one virtue which in the day of adversity outweighed many defects. D'Aubigné was not always to be loved, but he was always to be trusted; he was not often amiable, but he was invariably loyal; there was no bribe in the treasury of France that could affect his fidelity for a moment, and Henry, bred in the cynical pessimism of the Florentine's school, knew better than most men what fidelity was worth.

Within a few months of the flight from Paris, d'Aubigné was employed in two secret missions, the



first to the Estates of Blois, where he was recognised in spite of his disguise, and only escaped with the help of one of Catherine's maids of honour, and the second to Languedoc, to learn what truth there was in the rumours of Damville's defection. He was then appointed lieutenant to Vachonnière, the governor of Castel-jaloux, a small place in Guienne, where he spent the early part of 1577 in the aimless and desultory warfare which made a desert of that fruitful province. It was while he was recovering from wounds received in one of the skirmishes in which he took such cordial pleasure, that he began his great epic, *Les Tragiques*.

On Vachonnière's death, d'Aubigné expected to succeed to his command, but it was not bestowed upon him, and to his complaints of the unfair proportion of favour shown to Catholics, Henry replied that the Huguenots had the satisfaction of fighting for their religion, while the Catholics must naturally be provided with another recompense. The argument did not convince d'Aubigné; he was five-and-twenty, he had spent ten years in Navarre's service, and he was still only a lieutenant. Deeply wounded by his master's indifference to his merits, he resolved to sell his estate in Blois as soon as the impending peace was signed, and to exchange the service of the King of Navarre for that of Duke Casimir of Bavaria. He wrote him a reproachful farewell and departed, his hands "empty alike of bribes and benefits"; but, passing through Agen, he found a spaniel which had once belonged to Navarre dying of hunger in the

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street, and at once perceived in the discarded favourite admirable material for an object lesson. Navarre was to be in Agen the next day, and d'Aubigné carefully arranged that the dog should be placed in his way with a suitable inscription tied to his collar. His master read the lines and changed colour, as he always did when he was displeased, but he made no remark ; he had no difficulty in guessing the author of this impertinence :—

“ Citron who once slept softly at your feet,  
Whose bark the midnight murderer dismayed,  
Citron who, often trusted, ne'er betrayed,  
Has now no refuge but the dismal street.

By royal hands but yesterday caressed,  
To-day of every friend he is forgot,  
Hunger and cold and cruel blows his lot,  
From Fortune's favourite turned to Fortune's jest.

You loved him for his grace, his pretty ways,  
His tried devotion you were wont to praise,  
Your foes were his ; here ends his little day :

Pause, courtiers, pause, and turn your careless eyes,  
Where this poor outcast, starved and fainting lies ;  
He served a king ;—learn here how kings repay.”

D'Aubigné was on his way to offer his sword to the German duke when a glimpse of a girl's face scattered his projects to the winds. He was dismounting at the gate of the Château Saint-Gelais in Poitou, when he looked up and saw Suzanne de Lézay at the window and determined on the spot to make her his wife. He had now no wish to leave France,

and only pride prevented him from responding at once to Henry's conciliatory overtures ; but he burned four letters of recall unread before he could bring himself to return.

Suzanne de Lézay was the only daughter and heiress of the Baron of Surimeau, and her friends did not consider the Huguenot soldier a good enough match for her, but he pressed his suit with dogged perseverance, and after six years of patient courtship his constancy was rewarded. They were married in 1583.

Lavish of details concerning his military career, d'Aubigné is extremely reticent about his domestic life ; his autobiography permits us only an occasional glance at the woman he loved so deeply and mourned so long, in whom he recognised the good angel of his life, whose gracious and tranquil influence came as the supreme benediction of Heaven to that unquiet soul. He had not passed unscathed through the evil of court and of camp, he confesses that he was no better than other men, he lays no claim to the purity which illumines a few great names in that licentious age with its white lustre ; but he always "kept faith" with Suzanne. In his old age the sight of a happy bridal recalled "the joys God heaped upon him" on his own marriage day ; and when he was overwhelmed by the blackest calamity that can befall an honourable man, he could yet give thanks that she had been spared that intolerable anguish. They had thirteen years of happiness and then she died, leaving him "wandering through the world like a ghost without her." In the poem in which he awakes one

night, to see his dead wife at his bedside, there are lines whose tender cadence recalls the vision seen by the greater poet of a later day. Not "vested all in white pure as her mind," like Milton's saint, but marred and wasted by death, Suzanne stands before him ; the print of the grave is upon her, and yet to him she is dear and lovely as of old :—

"For still the fairest thing in thee lives on,  
Though life itself be lost ;"—

and still her eyes are the torch which he would fain follow "down to the dusty tomb." He stretches his arms to her in vain ; the phantom passes, without "the one cold kiss" for which he prays—

"As the light winds and as the dreams which float  
Through the vague dark."<sup>1</sup>

And though we have not here the noble music of the English sonnet, the lines are instinct with a profound and passionate emotion which touches a note of true lyrical beauty.

During the year of the Lovers' War, d'Aubigné commanded a brigade of cavalry, and was much engaged in what he calls the "pleasant exercises of war," but he was not at the taking of Cahors, the only notable incident of the campaign. In 1583, three weeks after his marriage, he was summoned to Pau, where he found the court in great agitation over the flagrant insults offered to Margaret of Navarre by her brother, the King of France, on her departure

<sup>1</sup> "Pareill'aux vens legers et aux songes qui volent  
Au vague de la nuit."

from Paris. There had been first a painful scene between them when he had publicly reproached his sister with her immoral life, and then, when she had started on her journey back to Guienne, her litter had been stopped and her ladies rudely handled by archers of the guard on an insulting pretext. Her husband could not well ignore so scandalous an affront, and he commissioned d'Aubigné to go to Saint Germain to invite his brother-in-law either to substantiate the charges brought against the Queen of Navarre or to withdraw them. D'Aubigné was unwilling to go; he was frankly afraid of placing himself within Catherine's reach, and he had long been at enmity with Margaret, and had not the least wish to risk his life as the champion of her honour; but in the end he went, and harangued the King in his loftiest manner on "the infamous part which had been played on the highest stage in Christendom." "I had my poignard ready," says the envoy, "and if they had assassinated me as I left the cabinet, I should have accounted for one or two of them first."

The death of the <sup>late</sup> King's brother, the Duke of Anjou (1584), transformed Navarre into a person of the first importance; the only hope of the royalist party now lay in his conversion, and every effort was put forth to induce him to baffle Guise, and to secure his own right of succession, by a timely submission to Rome. But the hour had not come; Guise was too dangerous an enemy and the King too uncertain a friend; Navarre dared not risk estranging his own Huguenot supporters until he saw his way more

*now Henry III*

clearly. He therefore renewed his profession of willingness to submit to the decision of a free and universal council, but he still protested that no man could be fairly expected to change his religion whenever it was convenient, as he changed his shirt.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this obstacle, it seemed certain for a time that the King would accept his cousin's assistance rather than surrender to Guise,—so certain indeed that at a council of war held at Guitres in March, 1585, at which sixty of the Huguenot officers were present, the question laid before them was whether they should lay down their arms and let those who liked enlist as individuals into the royal army, or join the King as a party. Turenne,<sup>2</sup> speaking first, advocated the former course; by entering the royal service separately, he said, they would display a humility which could not fail to disarm the King; it would be heaping coals of fire on his head, and he would in the end gratefully recognise that he owed his deliverance to his much-wronged yet loyal Huguenot subjects. Twenty voices had supported Turenne before “a certain maître-de-camp” rose to give his opinion. In a speech of passionate eloquence, d'Aubigné implored his chiefs not to sacrifice the existence of the party in the vain hope of securing the sovereign's gratitude or regard. He laughed to scorn the idea of disarming the King by

<sup>1</sup> “Dites, mon cousin, à ceux qui vous mettent telles choses en avant que la religion . . . ne se dépouille pas comme une chemise.”—Henry to the Archbishop of Rouen, 6th March 1583.

<sup>2</sup> Henri de la Tour, Vicomte de Turenne, afterwards (by his marriage with Charlotte de la Marck) Duke of Bouillon.



humility—of laying down their weapons and standing defenceless before their foes. “Shall we alone disarm when all France is arming? Shall our soldiers swear obedience to those who have sworn their ruin? The sceptre does not teach our foes respect—they must learn it from the sword; let us serve the King indeed; but when we kneel before him let it be in mail; let us lay our victories humbly, not timidly, at his feet.” “I am on his side!” cried Navarre as the speaker ended, and his counsel was unanimously accepted.

The Treaty of Nemours was the most crushing blow which had fallen upon the Huguenots since the day of the great massacre; it was said that it sent three times as many of them to mass. To the majority of them it was quite unexpected; they had made ready either to stand aside and look on while Catholic Royalist and Catholic Leaguer fought out their quarrel, or, better still, to join forces with the King and prove, once for all, that rebel and heretic were not synonymous terms. Instead they learned that the King had thrown down his arms, to resume them at Guise's bidding, and to turn them against his Reformed subjects; that Royalist and Leaguer were advancing together upon them, the extermination of heresy their avowed purpose. For many years the Reformed had enjoyed liberty of conscience all over the kingdom, and liberty of worship within certain limits; and though the edicts of pacification had been systematically infringed or evaded, the law was so far at least on the side of the minority; in violent contrast to this measure of toleration, the Edict of

July now decreed that no quarter was to be given on the field of battle to any heretic soldier who refused to recant. The assassination of the Prince of Orange in the previous year (July, 1584) had been a crushing disaster to the Protestant cause, and Parma's recent triumphs in the Netherlands seemed to presage darkly the fate of the French Huguenots. Worst of all, the ancient unity of the Huguenot party was gone; its chiefs distrusted and disliked each other, and Navarre, Condé, and Turenne were rivals rather than colleagues; while their adversaries had at last a leader whose talents equalled his ambition, who had but one aim, and pursued it with undeviating force. Dejected, all but despairing, with failing energy and ebbing courage, the Huguenot party prepared to resume the unequal struggle.

At the close of the council of war held at Guitres, d'Aubigné and four other gentlemen had been commissioned to raise regiments in Saintonge and Poitou, where Condé was in command; while Navarre, Montmorency, and Lesdiguières were rallying the Reformed in Guienne, Languedoc, and Dauphiné. A few trifling successes encouraged Condé to attempt the siege of Brouage, where Saint Luc,<sup>1</sup> the King's former favourite, was now governor. He borrowed from La Rochelle all the help he could get both in money and ships, and proceeded to invest the port, d'Aubigné being stationed with his regiment at Saint-Agnant-les-Marais to prevent the introduction of provisions or reinforcements by way of the marshes

<sup>1</sup> François d'Epinay, Seigneur de Saint Luc.

that lay between the city and the sea. In the meantime Condé had sent Clermont d'Amboise to raise levies in Anjou, and Rochemorte, one of Clermont's companions, had by a daring stratagem snatched the Castle of Angers from the Leaguers; but Rochemorte had with him only sixteen men, the town was still in the possession of the enemy, and Clermont found himself unable to strengthen the tiny garrison. The news that a footing had at last been obtained on the farther side of the Loire filled the camp of Brouage with exultation; Condé at once resolved that at all risks Rochemorte must be reinforced, and d'Aubigné was forthwith ordered to take a thousand mounted musketeers and throw himself into the castle or die in the attempt. But scarcely had he started on this most welcome errand when the prince changed his mind. The rivalry between the two Bourbons was at its height, and Condé's counsellors urged him not to lose this opportunity of performing a feat of arms that might eclipse Navarre's military renown; Angers, they declared, was "too fine a morsel for a mere maître-de-camp." The prince was persuaded and d'Aubigné recalled, to his bitter disappointment. Condé then left his infantry to carry on the siege of Brouage, and set off with Rohan for Angers with sixteen hundred mounted musketeers and six hundred and fifty mounted men-at-arms, all gentlemen volunteers; but they were long in getting ready and the delay was fatal.<sup>1</sup> They reached Angers (21st October) to find

<sup>1</sup> "D'Aubigné, si on l'eût laissé partir, fût sans doute arrivé à temps pour secourir la petite garnison."—Duc d'Aumale, *Hist. des Princes de Condé*, vol. ii. p. 151.

Rochemorte dead, the castle surrendered, and the Duke of Joyeuse, the royal commander-in-chief, awaiting them with an army of six thousand men. Condé had raised his force by the way to something like half this number, and he wasted two days in attempting to take the town by assault; it was then plain that there was nothing for it but to retreat, if indeed, retreat were still possible.

The royal forces destined to crush the Reformed of the south-west were concentrated in Anjou in three divisions, under Joyeuse, Mayenne, and Biron. When the Huguenots attempted to recross the Loire they found that Joyeuse was holding the river, and they turned back only to learn that Mayenne was in front of them and Biron on their flank; the only chance of slipping through the net was to scatter and try the meshes singly. Condé, therefore, disbanded his harassed little army and fled to Guernsey; Rohan made his way to Brittany, his own country; the rank and file, who were not well mounted, abandoned by their leaders and demoralised by their disorderly retreat, burnt their standards, flung away their weapons, and were thankful when they could find any one to whom they might safely surrender.<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, with thirty companions, plunged into the forest of Marchenoir, where they wandered miserably for ten days, lying hid by day in the brushwood and marching by night.

<sup>1</sup> "Ceux qui sont attrapez . . . se rendoient plus volontiers qu'on ne les vouloit prendre . . . les soldats qui se prennent disent qu'on les a menez à la boucherie. . . . Ces pauvres gens ont brûlez leurs cornettes de cavalerie, chose qui ne s'oyt jamais dire, quelque désespoir auquel on a esté réduit,"—Mayenne to his sister Catherine, Bouillé, vol. iii. p. 167.

Once they were besieged in a barn where they had found shelter by a company of Italian mercenaries, and had to fight their way out ; and once they fell in with a small party of the enemy, whom they attacked and defeated, taking the officer in command prisoner. Had he been a person of sufficient distinction to assure them of their lives, they would have very gladly surrendered to him, for they were exhausted with hunger and fatigue ; as it was, they allowed him to depart on his giving his word to obtain the freedom of some Huguenot in exchange for his own, and went on their way. They followed the Cher as far as Saint Florent, made their way through Berri and the Limousin into Poitou, and finally into Saintonge, when d'Aubigné hastened to Brouage to discover what had become of that part of his regiment which had been left behind there. The defeat of Condé's enterprise had had a disastrous effect upon the affairs of the Reformed in Poitou and Saintonge. Matignon, the royalist governor of Guienne, had seized the opportunity to march to the relief of Brouage, but the news of the rout in Anjou did the Marshal's work for him before he arrived. The panic that had scattered the army of Angers ran through the besiegers' force, and by the time Matignon had reached Gemozac, the Huguenot officers could do nothing with their men but withdraw them from the task, for which they had now no courage. The plague then broke out in the province, and was nowhere more virulent than in the Huguenot stronghold of Saint Jean d'Angely ; the crops failed com-



pletely, and it was impossible to victual troops or garrisons properly. Sick at heart at the spectacle of the ruin that had come upon the cause, d'Aubigné obtained a safe-conduct from a royalist friend and went home to his wife, who was already mourning him as dead.

He was not long left to himself. A few weeks later, Rohan was back in Saintonge, and he joined the municipality of La Rochelle in sending an urgent invitation to d'Aubigné to come back and begin the work of building up again the shattered fragments of the Huguenot army. D'Aubigné did not respond with any alacrity. His back, he told them, was still sore with the burden that had been laid upon him in conducting the retreat from Angers—he was not able yet to carry a new load; with unwonted humility he assured them that he felt quite unfit to take care of any one but himself. But he did not persist in his refusal; for how could he sit at ease in his own house when Poitou was lost, and the Angoumois, when on all hands were reports of defections and betrayals, when Saint-Gelais and La Boulaye were spending their last crowns in the defences of La Rochelle, and Laval,<sup>1</sup> in Saint Jean d'Angely, his scanty garrison weakened by plague and famine, was yet holding the Duke of Mayenne and all his artillery at bay? He was provided with a small sum of money—he never had much of his own—and established his headquarters in the little island of Rochefort, to the south of La Rochelle, where in four days he was joined by eight

<sup>1</sup> Guy de Laval, son of Coligny's brother, François d'Andelot.



hundred men. Sorluz, an officer in Navarre's service, brought him five companies more, a good many volunteers rallied to his standard, and he presently found himself in command of about twelve hundred foot-soldiers and one hundred and twenty horse. He marched at once into Poitou where good luck attended his first movements, and each success, however trifling, brought him recruits. Condé's arrival at La Rochelle in January was a fresh encouragement to his party, and in the early spring several of the small places in the neighbourhood of Brouage which had been lost in the autumn were recovered. In the beginning of April, affairs on the mainland looked fairly hopeful, and d'Aubigné transferred the greater part of his regiment to Condé and resolved, with the remaining five hundred, to make himself master of the island of Oléron.

The island, which lies off the coast of Saintonge, almost opposite Brouage, then considered the second harbour in France, was a place of considerable strategical value. D'Aubigné confided his intentions of seizing it to the Count of Laval, who promised that if he could take the place and hold it for forty-eight hours, reinforcements should be sent him by sea from La Rochelle. The Huguenot attack was unexpected and the place was easily seized, but to hold it was a different matter, for no sooner was the governor of Brouage aware of his loss than he prepared to retrieve it. D'Aubigné had only enjoyed peaceful possession of his long coveted dignity, the governorship of a place, for a few days, when Saint

Luc began to pour his pikemen and musketeers on to the shore from a fleet of fifty boats. The assault began at daybreak, and long after nightfall they were still fighting desperately, in the clear light of the April moon, on the gleaming stretches of wet sand that fringed the island, and up and down the streets of the little town at the foot of the castle. Laval, who was besieging Dampierre with Condé, heard of d'Aubigné's peril, and remembering his promise, rode himself to La Rochelle for help. Thirty ships of war were despatched to the rescue, but as the fleet came through the straits of Antioch, they encountered a royal vessel, the *Great Biscayen*, of six hundred tons, and captured her, owing chiefly to her captain's bad seamanship. The thirty then fell to disputing who should have the honour of taking the prize home; no one could be prevailed upon to give way, and in the end Oléron was abandoned to its fate, while the *Grand Biscayen* was triumphantly escorted by the whole squadron into the harbour of La Rochelle. D'Aubigné, however, was still holding fourteen of the forty-six barricades with which he had roughly fortified his castle, and Saint Luc, whose troops had suffered severely, decided to withdraw them. He left three hundred and eighty dead behind him. "And for our part," says d'Aubigné, "we would gladly have paid them for going."

The governor of Oléron had not, however, seen the last of Saint Luc. Condé, to make amends for the disappointment caused by the raising of the siege

of Brouage, had conceived an ingenious device by which to destroy its fine harbour, and the Rochelais, moved by jealousy of their neighbour's mercantile advantages, joyfully lent their assistance and presented the prince with fifteen vessels, the largest of them of two hundred tons. Saint Gelais, with the readiness to adapt himself to either of the services which was characteristic of the time, was made Admiral; and the fleet was employed in diligently searching along the coast for derelict vessels, which were filled with ballast and sunk, so as to form a sort of palisade across the mouth of the Brouage harbour. Saint Luc did his best to interfere with the execution of this manœuvre, and every day for some weeks, d'Aubigné tells us, "some pleasant skirmish" took place; and as he had six boats of his own, he was enabled to join in these diversions, and captured a good many prisoners whose ransoms made him a richer man than he had ever yet been. In June the King of Navarre arrived at La Rochelle and did the Governor of Oléron the honour of paying him a visit, but the magnificent reception offered him excited—if we are to believe the autobiography—considerable envy both in the King and the courtiers; the appearance of two hundred of the garrison in scarlet breeches braided with silver (the plunder of a Spanish ship) seems indeed to have called forth a deplorable exhibition of ill-feeling. At last, towards the end of the summer, there came a day when Saint Luc, learning that d'Aubigné had contributed a large contingent to the assault then being made by Laval

on Saintes, seized the opportunity to renew his attack. D'Aubigné's rashness had reduced the number of his troops to eighty, and to the four hundred men landed by Saint Luc, he could only offer a brief and ineffectual resistance. The island was captured and the governor carried to Brouage, "and so ended," the historian notes with a sigh, "these months of felicity." During his captivity he and Saint Luc became excellent friends, and he was allowed presently to go to La Rochelle, giving his word to be in Brouage again on a certain Sunday. But on the morning of that day he received a secret message from Saint Luc, warning him by no means to return, because express orders had come from court for the transference of the prisoner to Paris, where he was to be executed. The Rochelais were ready to imprison him themselves in order to prevent his return, but evading the devices of his friends and ignoring the kindly hint of his enemy, he kept his tryst at the appointed hour. "My head," he once said, "is worth a good deal to me; but my honour I value at even a trifle more." He was received by Saint Luc with sincere regret, but immediately before his departure, the Huguenots captured a royalist officer of such high rank that Saint Luc ventured to disobey his orders and to consent to an exchange.

At the end of this year, Catherine once more attempted the task of pacification; but a truce of a few weeks was the only result of the long conference held at Bris between the Queen-mother and the Huguenot leaders. Vexed by the tenacity of the

rebels, and especially by the rigid attitude of Condé and Turenne, she at last told the latter angrily that the King was now entirely resolved that there should be but one religion in the kingdom. "We consent to that willingly, Madam," answered the viscount, "provided it is our own." It was during this truce, when d'Aubigné was deprived of his usual occupations, that the Devil, as he tells us, seizing the occasion, tempted him to turn his back on the Cause.

Since the affair of Angers there had been more than the usual amount of friction between Navarre and d'Aubigné. The court of Navarre had derived a good deal of malicious pleasure from Condé's disaster, but those who had been engaged in that unhappy adventure could hardly be expected to regard it merely as an entertaining illustration of the younger Bourbon's vanity and incompetence; and d'Aubigné, in particular, was not the man to bear patiently the ungenerous amusement it provoked. When Navarre came to Saintonge they fell out more seriously than usual, until, irritated by what he considered unjust censures, and wounded by what he felt to be inadequate acknowledgment of his services, d'Aubigné retired with his wounds and his ruined fortunes, and sat down to consider seriously if it was too late for him to transfer his devotion (as so many others had done) to a quarter where it might be more correctly appreciated. It was impossible for him to change his party unless he changed his convictions; could this be done? He thought that perhaps with some trouble, it could. His Catholic friends gladly pro-



vided him with a supply of theological masterpieces, and resolving, he assures us, to trample under foot all his early prejudices, he solemnly began to study the controversy afresh. But it was not to be; he read and prayed in vain. The Franciscan Panigarola he rejected as shallow; he thought more highly of Campion's rhetoric than of his logic; he could not sufficiently admire Bellarmin's force, lucidity, and above all, his candour, but in the end even that great apologist was found wanting. When at the expiration of the truce, Navarre summoned him to the siege of Talmont, he returned his books to their owners and hastened to obey that irresistible voice.

In 1587 it was plain that the storm which had been gathering since the edict of July, was about to burst, in spite of the King's feeble efforts to divert it. For two years he had delayed and prevaricated, but now Guise intimated to him that he would hear no more excuses; the conditions of the treaty of Nemours must be put into execution. The Pope had already (in 1585) placed both Navarre and Condé under the ban of the Church, declaring them incapable, as relapsed heretics, of succeeding to any dignity, "particularly to the Kingdom of France;" and it only remained for the King to exterminate the heretics and then to choose an heir. Henry yielded, and three armies were raised; one under Guise was sent to intercept the German auxiliaries on the frontier, one he reserved for himself, and the third under Joyeuse was despatched into Guienne, where Matignon was already in command



of a considerable force, with orders to force a pitched battle upon the Huguenots.

The main body of the Huguenot force was in Poitou when Joyeuse, with the flower of the Catholic nobles in his ranks, crossed the Loire in September. Navarre was absorbed in the problem of how he was to effect a junction with the twenty-five thousand Germans and Swiss who were coming to his relief; it seemed impossible that his little army could escape annihilation unless he was reinforced, but with the Loire in the King's hands and with Joyeuse, strong and splendidly equipped, in front of him, the solution was not easy, particularly as no one knew the Germans' route. He proposed to return to Guienne,<sup>1</sup> and thence to strike eastward, up the valley of the Dordogne, through Auvergne, to the source of the Loire, on the chance of meeting his auxiliaries in Burgundy; but, for any possibility of success, the plan should have been adopted earlier. The Germans had crossed the frontier of Lorraine in the last week of August; and by the middle of September, when Navarre was still in Poitou, they had lost (though he of course did not know it) something like half their number. The Huguenot army, therefore, retreated steadily southward, past Moncontour and Jarnac, with their discouraging associations, for some hundred and fifty miles, with the royalists marching a little to the east, almost parallel with them; they were less than twelve miles apart on the 19th of October, when Joyeuse paused at Chalais to

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém.* vol. i. p. 738, etc.

dine, thus giving Navarre time to occupy Coutras, a small place on the border of Guienne, at the junction of the Isle and the Dronne. Matignon was waiting at Libourne on the further side of the Isle, so that their way was blocked, and further retreat was impossible ; Navarre therefore drew up his troops in a crescent, on a low slope to the east of the town, and awaited the Duke.

D'Aubigné had been ill for some weeks, but the news that a battle was impending brought him from his sick-bed ; he hurried with fifteen musketeers, all he could raise, to Taillebourg, where he hoped to fall in with the Huguenot army, but it was gone ; he followed it south, with difficulty evading the enemy's scouts, and reached Coutras just in time. During their twenty-five years of intermittent warfare, the Huguenots had never gained a single victory in the open field ; that they never would gain one was the general belief of both sides. All the magic of Navarre's presence, all his wonderful gift of inspiring confidence, of convincing his soldiers that victory was within their grasp when it seemed most distant, was needed on that 20th of October, when the sun rose over the glittering array of the royal forces, to dispel the memories of disaster which haunted the bravest man in his little army. Joyeuse had about six thousand foot-soldiers and two thousand horse ; in infantry Navarre was almost his equal, but he had hardly a thousand horse, and only two guns to seven. He had, however, secured the best position, for the royalists had only arrived at day-break, fatigued after a night march through difficult

country ; they had marched fast, too, for they were greatly afraid the enemy might evade them after all. Navarre addressed his troops in one of those gallant little speeches which acted like a charm upon his impressionable southern gentlemen, and then turning to his cousins, Condé and Soissons, "Gentlemen," said he, "I need only remind you that you are of the blood of Bourbon, and Vive Dieu ! you shall see to-day that I am the head of our house." Then the Huguenots knelt to commit to Heaven the issue of the day, and presently the sweet and solemn music of the Psalm :—

"Voici l'heureuse journée  
Que Dieu a faite à plein désir" <sup>1</sup>—

floated across the green meadows. Joyeuse and his royalist nobles in their plumed helmets and jewelled armour laughed when they saw the heads bent in prayer, but one of the group, who had been a Huguenot, grew pensive as he considered the dark lines, and told his confident young general, who had promised to carry the heads of both the Bourbons back to Paris, that the victory would not be the simple affair he expected.

At nine o'clock the Huguenot guns opened fire, and every shot told ; while those of the enemy were badly directed and took no effect. The royalists impatiently demanded the order to charge, and Laverdin's troop of light horse swept down upon Turenne's

<sup>1</sup> Clement Marot's version of Ps. cxviii. 24, 25 : "This is the day the Lord hath made ; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord, save now, we beseech thee : O Lord, send now prosperity."

mounted men-at-arms, shattering the right-hand point of the Huguenot crescent. The Huguenots believed the battle lost; but as Turenne's Gascons scattered and fled, they heard the taunting cry from the Poitevin regiment, "Poitou and Saintonge, see how the Gascons run!" "No harangue," says d'Aubigné, "could have been so effective;" for the honour of their province they turned, rallied, and reformed under the shelter of Condé's squadron. Joyeuse himself meanwhile led his lancers up the slope upon the centre of the crescent formed by the three squadrons commanded by Navarre and his cousins; but he put them too soon at the gallop, and the élan of the charge was exhausted before they had come within striking distance. The Huguenots, armed with sword and pistol, stood motionless till the enemy were within fifteen feet of them; then dashing forward, they hurled themselves upon them, allowing them no room to use their lances. The Duke's brilliant cavaliers were no match at close quarters for their war-worn antagonists; almost in a moment the thin, bright line was caught and crumpled in the grip of Navarre's swordsmen, and the defeat of the cavalry was the signal for a general rout. The horrible cruelties practised by Joyeuse during his campaign in Poitou were fresh in the Huguenot minds, the royalists had boasted that they would show no mercy to the vanquished, and for all Navarre's efforts, they were shown very little. They fought with the greatest courage, and it was reckoned that over three thousand

men were left with Joyeuse<sup>1</sup> and his brother on the plain ; the Huguenot loss was estimated at not more than forty men.<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigné's friend, Saint Luc, was among the prisoners.

There is no action in Henry's life for which he has been so uniformly condemned (Duplessis is his only apologist), as for the inaction which succeeded the battle of Coutras. The vigour which had been so conspicuously manifested on the battlefield was as conspicuously absent from the council-chamber ; instead of following up his advantage, he allowed the army to disband immediately, leaving Turenne with a few soldiers to carry on a desultory warfare in Perigord, while Condé returned to Saintonge, and he himself went down to Pau, to lay the captured flags at Corisande's feet ; while the Germans were abandoned to the fate from which Châtillon was striving single-handed to save them. There was absolutely no sequel to the triumphant story of the 20th of October.

Navarre now thought the time had come for putting into execution a wonderful engineering scheme devised by d'Aubigné for establishing a strong position at the mouth of the Loire. "You have worried me often enough," said he to d'Aubigné, "about your great plan ; and you have tried to make me entrust it to persons who would have taken all the glory of it to themselves, and one of them (he alluded to Turenne) the profit as well. I have, however, chosen my own

<sup>1</sup> Most writers say he fell fighting : d'Aubigné says he was in the act of surrendering to two Huguenots when a third shot him down.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate seems to me quite incredible ; but it is accepted by modern writers as authoritative as the Duke of Aumale and M. Henri Martin.

time and my own man, Duplessis-Mornay ; if you can make up your mind to lay aside your ill-humour, —I own you have some cause for it,—for the sake of your master and the cause you profess to love so much, you may go with him. I know you lost everything in Oléron, so you must take what you want from my stables.” “I thank your Majesty for your kind offer,” answered d’Aubigné. “Without it I should have been obliged to shoulder a musket.” Nothing came of the plan, which seems to have been the same which is described by Madame Duplessis and attributed to her husband,<sup>1</sup> but in the meantime Beauvais-sur-mer was besieged and taken. It was on the return from Beauvais that Henry desired to learn from Turenne and d’Aubigné their view of the matrimonial question with which he was greatly occupied. Did they think that if he could get a divorce from Margaret of Valois he would do well to marry the Countess of Guiche, his “beautiful Corisande”? They were to reflect upon it and he would hear the result next morning. It was an extremely delicate question and Turenne wisely discovered during the night that he had urgent business at Marans ; the equerry resolved to do his duty, and we may perhaps conjecture that duty, when it took the form of speaking his mind to his master, was never wholly unpalatable. They rode out together and the King quoted examples of no less than thirty princes, both ancient and modern, who had married for love out of their own rank, and had been very happy ;

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. et Lettres*, vol. i. p. 164.



and as many more of great alliances which had proved ruinous alike to prince and people. Then he bade d'Aubigné give his opinion; "for," said he, "this once I need your rough faithfulness." D'Aubigné had no hesitation in availing himself of the privilege thus offered. He did not suppose, he said, that Henry had collected all these fine examples himself, "hating reading, as I know you do." These historical researches were obviously the work of some interested flatterer, whose only object was to gratify his patron, for whatever other princes might have done, Henry had no right in his present position to contemplate so doubtful a step. He had himself loved too deeply to imagine that any arguments could alter Henry's feeling; but he begged the King to wait, to make love his spur, till in more prosperous times he might be free to please himself. Navarre thanked him for his candour and promised to wait two years before taking the decisive step; the delay was more than enough to destroy Corisande's hopes of a crown. At the end of that year d'Aubigné became governor of Maillezais in La Vendée, and he was there enjoying a brief interval of repose when the assassination of Henry of Guise altered the course of events.

Henry III. had hoped in killing Guise to kill the League, as his mother had hoped to see the French Reformation die with Coligny; <sup>1</sup> the one anticipation was as groundless as the other. The League, in a frenzy of passion for the loss of its idol, declared war

<sup>1</sup> Martin, *Hist. de France*.

5009  
C. 10  
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to the knife upon his murderer, Mayenne received the title of "Lieutenant-General of the State-Royal and Crown of France," the Pope refused to grant absolution for the Cardinal's murder, and the King, stupefied at the failure of his great stroke, realised at last that his only hope of salvation was in Navarre and his Huguenots. He deferred taking the repugnant step as long as he could; it was not till his humble prayers to the Pope and his timid overtures to the League had been rudely rejected that he signed a truce (3rd April, 1589) for one year with his cousin, and arranged a meeting with him at Plessis-les-Tours. It was not without considerable hesitation that Navarre consented to this last step; the King's reputation for perfidy was so well established that many of the Huguenots were persuaded that the invitation masked a snare, and they reminded Navarre that the assassin of Guise had been first the assassin of Coligny. Navarre himself hesitated; it was Coligny's son who, comprehending the far-reaching consequences of a refusal to trust the King at that critical moment, put by his private wrongs for the sake of France, and with incomparable magnanimity urged his chief to take the bloodstained hand extended to him. The two Henrys met in the park of Plessis-les-Tours on the 30th of April, in a crowd of eager spectators, the one lithe and vigorous, his eye as bright and his step as elastic as ever, though his moustache and beard were turning a little grey, in a doublet visibly worn on the shoulder from the rubbing

of his cuirass, a scarlet cloak, and a grey hat with a great white plume; the other more haggard, more listless than of old, a pallid image of royalty, his bloody grave yawning already unseen at his feet. Navarre dropped on his knee, saying in his impetuous way, "Now I can die, I have seen my King," and the other raised him, and embraced him warmly, amid deafening shouts of "Long live the King, long live Navarre!" Three months later (2nd August) they were about to begin the siege of Paris when the dagger of the fanatical monk, Jacques Clément, made the Béarnais King of France. *Henry III assassinated*

Seldom has any heir found himself in possession of so embarrassing a legacy as that which was thus abruptly bequeathed to Henry of Navarre. He was undoubtedly the rightful successor; Henry II.'s four sons had all died childless, and the Salic law stood between his daughter Claude's children and the throne; no Bourbon but the old Cardinal dreamed of disputing Navarre's claim; and neither Philip nor the League had yet proposed to set the dynasty of Saint Louis absolutely aside. On the other hand Henry had only three months before been in arms against the government; he was still the leader of the party whose persistent demand for religious liberty had inflicted thirty years of civil war upon the country; and as a relapsed heretic he lay under the heaviest censures of the Church, in a land where the roots of Church and State had for centuries been inseparably entwined. As he watched by the dead in the

*W. A. D. 1589*

purple-hung chamber at Saint Cloud, he saw the courtiers gathering in whispering groups, observing him with suspicious eyes; he could overhear the muttered defiance of those who swore that no heretic should be their master.<sup>1</sup> Henry III. had died early on the morning of the 2nd of August; that same day the majority of the Catholic nobles sent a deputation to inform his successor that they could not recognise a Huguenot sovereign—he must choose between his creed and his crown. Henry repulsed the proposal with just indignation; they had no right, he protested, to take him by the throat at the moment of his accession and force him to reveal himself an atheist at heart. The acrimonious discussion which followed was interrupted by Givry<sup>2</sup> and d'Humières, who had secured the adhesion of the nobles of the Isle de France and of Picardy, and by the news that Sancy had prevailed upon the twelve thousand Swiss who had recently been engaged for the royal service to remain with the new King; but in spite of these favourable circumstances all that day and the next morning the debate continued. Some were for excluding Henry from the succession altogether, unless he would recant on the spot; others were willing to refer the matter to a meeting of the States-General; while Biron proposed to recognise him provisionally as leader of the royalists, but not as king until he was converted. The army numbered about forty thousand men, and of these only five thousand were Huguenots. There was an hour when Henry thought of withdrawing to

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*

<sup>2</sup> Anne d'Anglure, Baron de Givry.

the other side of the Loire, to await a more favourable turn of events ; d'Aubigné was one of those who most strenuously opposed any such admission of weakness. "This is the hour, Sire," said he, "that will make you King or nothing. . . . If you allow yourself to be scared by your own people, who will fear you ? Whom will you not have to fear ? . . . Who will believe you King of France if you date your letters from Limoges ?" Finally Biron was bribed with the promise of the county of Perigord to throw his influence into the right scale, and on the 4th of August a sort of contract was signed by Henry on the one hand, and by Montpensier, Longueville, Conti, Biron, and many more of the Catholic nobles on the other. By this document the King pledged himself to maintain the Catholic religion in its entirety throughout the kingdom ; to convoke a national council within six months, or sooner if possible, and to submit to its decisions ; not to allow in the meantime the exercise of any religion but the Catholic except in places where another was already established ; to give all offices and appointments that should fall vacant to Catholics, except those held already by Huguenots ; and to preserve all princes, officers of the crown, and seigneurs in their present dignities and possessions. The nobles in return recognised him as King, "according to the fundamental laws of this kingdom," and promised him service and obedience.<sup>1</sup> But a good many names were missing from the signatures. Nevers preferred to remain

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém.* vol. iv. p. 381, etc.

neutral, Retz did the same, Epernon declared that the King's service required his presence in his government of the Angoumois, and took with him seven thousand men ; others departed either from interest or principle and joined the League. The Huguenots even were not all of one mind. The most disinterested and the most clear-sighted among them,—Duplessis, Sully, La Noue, Châtillon, d'Aubigné, and La Force, for example—stood by the King, in spite of the clause in the "declaration" which pointed unmistakably to an approaching change of front ; but La Trémoille, the most powerful noble in Poitou, went home, followed by most of the Poitevins in the army, and many of the Reformed imitated his example because the three months' campaign had utterly exhausted their resources and they could go no further.<sup>1</sup> When all the deserters were gone, about half the army was left ; Henry could not hope to take Paris with twenty thousand men and so, deferring the siege of the capital, he marched with his sadly diminished forces into Normandy.

### III

The conflict in which Henry was now engaged called forth all that was most admirable in his character ; the latent energy which had hitherto been only manifested in brilliant flashes, as at Cahors and at Coutras, now carried him forward with rapid and unfaltering steps towards his great goal. It has been

<sup>1</sup> La Force, *Mém.* vol. i. p. 63.



reckoned<sup>1</sup> that at his accession, one-sixth of the country was royalist, five-sixths either neutral or for the League; in nine months, with his handful of men, he had swept Normandy clear of the League, he had secured the best positions in Brittany, Champagne, Picardy, the Isle de France, Touraine, Maine, and Anjou; Ornano and Lesdiguières, who ruled Dauphiné between them, and Montmorency (Damville), who held undisputed sway in Languedoc, had decided to serve "the King of all brave men"; and he had been formally recognised by the Swiss confederation and by the republic of Venice.

D'Aubigné was at Maillezais in the autumn of 1589, in charge for a time of that very important state-prisoner, the Cardinal of Bourbon,<sup>2</sup> whom the League had proclaimed Charles X.; he missed being present both at Arques and Ivry, but he was with the King in the summer of 1590 when he began the siege of Paris. We hear of him during the next three years in various engagements, at the sieges of Poitiers, Lagny, Rouen, and a host of other places, and until Henry's conversion their relations seem to have been unusually harmonious. D'Aubigné loves to dwell upon these days; upon the gallant leader whose presence in the field was an inspiration, who did with a phrase what another would hardly have done with a battalion, who exposed his life with a temerity which every

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin, *Hist. de France*.

<sup>2</sup> M. Berger de Xivrey in his notes to Henry's *Lettres Missives* disputes d'Aubigné's statement of this fact. He says that the Cardinal never was at Maillezais. The receipt given to Duplessis by the gentlemen who conducted the Cardinal from Loudun to Maillezais is in Duplessis, *Mém.* vol. ii. p. 20.

soldier felt bound to emulate, and who yet remembered always, with a deep and abiding sense of compassion, that the vanquished were his own subjects, his own children. He fought, as Parma said, like a common carabineer, but he conquered like a king.

From the moment when Henry became King of France his conversion was a foregone conclusion ; every one knew it except those who refused to know. He had never at any time pretended to consider himself bound to his mother's creed by an indissoluble tie ; he had refused all invitations to forsake it as a matter of honour rather than of conscience : no gentleman, he said, could change his religion when summoned to do so with the knife at his throat.<sup>1</sup> But between the time of his leaving Paris in 1576 and his abjuration at La Rochelle there was a period of three months<sup>2</sup> during which he went neither to mass nor to sermon, and the pause was full of significance ; he was obviously reluctant to commit himself by an open profession of Protestantism until he saw more clearly what was to come of it. The hesitation was most natural under the circumstances, but it did not argue any very warm attachment to either faith. "My religion," he said,<sup>3</sup> "is the religion of all good men," and although it seems likely that Rome's teaching was more congenial to him than that of

<sup>1</sup> "Mais comment ? la dague à la gorge. Quand je n'eusse point eu de respect à ma conscience, celui de mon honneur m'en eust empêché par manière de dire." — *Lettres Missives*, To the Three Estates, 4th March, 1589.

<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*

<sup>3</sup> "Ceux qui suivent tout droit leur conscience sont de ma religion, et moi, je suis de celle de tous ceux qui sont braves et bons." — *Lettres Missives*, vol. i. p. 122.

Geneva, this declaration of indifference to theological landmarks is the clearest and probably the sincerest expression of his religious sentiment that we have on record. Those, therefore, who assert that Henry laid his convictions, a costly sacrifice, on the high altar of his country's welfare, and those who declare that he sold them to receive a kingdom as the price, are equally in error; he could neither sell nor sacrifice what he did not possess. The apparent levity with which the change was effected has been criticised more severely than the change itself; this is the explanation of it. Henry's conversion was never, in any sense of the word, a religious question; for Henry there was, in fact, no religious question. This too is the explanation of the miraculous change which had come over him since his accession; for the first time he found himself fighting for an object which commanded his sympathies. Circumstances had thrust the leadership of the Reformed upon him; the best part of his life had been spent in maintaining a cause to which he was at heart profoundly indifferent; the leader of the Huguenots was a Huguenot only, as it were, by accident. But to the tips of his fingers Henry was a Frenchman and a royalist; France and the crown were the magical words which transformed the "clever light-cavalry captain," as Napoleon called him, into a great general, a great statesman.

He had been proclaimed King in August; by November there were rumours that on account of "the uncertainty of (his) perseverance in the faith,"

the churches thought of choosing a new Protector. He wrote<sup>1</sup> indignantly to Duplessis of the accusation thus brought against him, and complains of the difficulties which beset him on all sides; the preachers of the League are everywhere seducing the people, and many of his own friends have left him in spite of his prayers and remonstrances; he reproaches the Huguenots impatiently with their suspicions, but he does not reply to them; it is unreasonable of them to doubt his perseverance, but he does not add distinctly that he intends to persevere. The next year he writes to the Marshal Matignon:<sup>2</sup> "I am aware that the point on which you chiefly base the establishment of my affairs is a change of religion, and I truly believe that if this matter were settled, many others would be settled with it." But he goes on to explain that although the change would be useful, it could not be effected as quickly as people wished; being a matter of faith and religion it requires ripe and holy reflection, and for that he has at present really no time. He wishes to crush his enemies before announcing any revolution, lest he should be accused of having been driven to it by fear, or some other motive, and not by the inspiration of God alone; his only aim in the matter is his own salvation and the blessing of peace, and he brings to its consideration a pure intention and a mind supple, unprejudiced, and open to reason.<sup>3</sup> Early in the following year the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres Missives*, 7th Nov. 1589, vol. iii. p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> "Un esprit souple, et sans aucune affection, capable d'être manié par raison."  
—*Lettres Missives*, 1590, vol. iii. p. 315.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Marquis of Pisani, who was sent as a delegate from the French Catholic royalists to the Pope, was privately instructed by the King to explain to His Holiness that "before consenting to be converted, he must be assured of the obedience of his Catholic subjects, because failing to observe this order, His Majesty would be in danger of being laughed at by the one and forsaken by the other party." If the League would undertake to obey him when he became a Catholic, he would proceed at once to "receive instruction."<sup>1</sup>

So far from undertaking to obey Henry the Leaguers were then in the act of electing a new sovereign to replace Charles X., the old Cardinal who had died at Fontenay-le-Comte, in May, 1590; their difficulty lay in deciding between the rival candidates, the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, the Duke of Lorraine's eldest son;<sup>2</sup> Mayenne; his nephew, the young Duke of Guise; and Philip II.'s daughter, Clara Eugenia.<sup>3</sup> But the operations of the League concerned Henry less nearly than the intrigues set on foot by his own Catholic followers, who had formed a new Third Party, whose moving spirit was Francis d'O, Henry's minister of finance, who had successfully cheated the League, the King, and the Huguenots, one after another. Henry's cousin,<sup>4</sup> the new Cardinal of Bourbon, allowed the Third Party to use him much as the League had used his uncle,

<sup>1</sup> In Martin, *Hist. de France*, vol. x. p. 204. The marquis was not received.

<sup>2</sup> A Valois by his mother, Claude of France.

<sup>3</sup> A Valois by her mother, Elizabeth of France.

<sup>4</sup> Younger brother of the Prince of Condé who died in 1588.

in the fond hope that the crown which seemed likely to slip through the Huguenot Bourbon's fingers might fall into the Catholic Bourbon's outstretched hand. Every reverse which Henry met with was attributed by d'O and his pious companions to the wrath of Heaven upon their heretic prince ; and many who did not mind braving the wrath of Heaven were unwilling to face the poverty and fatigue which the service of the Béarnais involved. It was well enough, they said, for the Huguenots who were accustomed to live like tortoises sewn into their armour, to endure the extremity of toil and privation, and to think the promise of a pitched battle an ample reward ; they who had served a king of gold could not remain with this king of iron. One hour in church would do more for peace than twenty years of war ; they threatened to abandon him immediately if he delayed fixing the hour of his conversion. Henry himself was infinitely weary of the barren, unending struggle ; he was fast growing old under the strain of it ; his mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, added her supplications, hoping that if he became a Catholic he would get a divorce from Margaret and marry her : Du Perron,<sup>1</sup> the witty and learned priest, was eager to conduct the King to Rome by the pleasant path he had trodden himself. And in all these clamorous voices, in the coarse threats of d'O, the foul-mouthed profligate, in the fluent rhetoric of Du Perron, the diverting renegade, in the

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Davy du Perron, afterwards Bishop of Evreux, the son of a Huguenot doctor.



soft persuasions of his mistress,—unfortunate agents, certainly, in a nominally religious transaction,—he heard the heartrending appeal of his country yearning for peace. He turned for counsel to the Huguenot, Sully, who scoffed at the notion that salvation was in the exclusive gift either of Rome or of Geneva,<sup>1</sup> and advised the King to choose the easiest course; to the Huguenot d'Aubigné, who, even while passionately adjuring his master to resist the tempter, was compelled to admit that the way of virtue was long and rough. The Pope, Clement VIII., who was completely under the dominion of Philip II., would have nothing to say to the illustrious convert, but the man who had led the Reformed without caring a jot for the Reformation, saw no difficulty in becoming a Roman Catholic in spite of the Pope. On the 18th of July, 1593, the King went publicly to the Huguenot service for the last time;<sup>2</sup> on the 23rd he spent several hours in listening to the arguments of the Gallican prelates who had undertaken to convince him of his errors, disputing every inch of theological territory with a logical dexterity which disconcerted his instructors, and suddenly, at the end of the skirmish, surrendering the position in a sentence not easily to be forgotten by any who heard it. “You have not satisfied me,” he said, “as I hoped you would, but look, I place my soul in your hands, and I pray you to see to it well; for where you make me go in to-day I shall come out

<sup>1</sup> *Econ. Roy.* vol. ii. p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> L'Estoile.

thence no more until I die.”<sup>1</sup> That evening he said farewell to his Huguenot ministers, begging them with tears to think kindly of him still and to remember him in their prayers; and on the morning of the 25th, amid the acclamations of a great multitude, he passed under a cloudless sky, along the rose-strewn way to Saint Denis, where, for the third time, the Béarnais abjured his faith, receiving “provisional absolution.” Many of the Parisians had availed themselves of a short truce to come out and witness the spectacle (unique, I believe, in ecclesiastical annals) of a repentant heretic being solemnly received into the Church of Rome in deliberate and open defiance of that Church’s head.

In a letter to “certain gentlemen of the religion,” dated the same day, Henry assures them that his change of faith will not alter his affection for them; his motives are, he says, chiefly, “the sure assurance I have of being able to obtain salvation in the Roman Catholic Church, and to avoid differing on this point from the kings, my predecessors . . . and that also by this means not only the pretexts but also the causes of the divisions and revolts now undermining the state may be removed.”<sup>2</sup> Here, if anywhere, we have a straightforward statement of Henry’s position. This is the language neither of a hero nor a hypocrite. It is a frank confession that his change of faith was a political expedient, and

<sup>1</sup> L’Estoile, *Journal*, July 1593.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres Missives*, 25th July 1593, vol. iii. p. 823.

it is made by a man who only dimly suspected that political expediency is not the supreme law of life.

Henry's conversion was the death-blow of the League. Its chiefs tried to persuade the Parisians that it was only an ingenious trick to open the gates of the capital, but the besieged were worn out by starvation and disease, and disgusted at their leaders' miserable dissensions; and some of them had seen for themselves the contrition and piety of their converted king. The city surrendered on the 21st of March 1594, when Henry made his peaceful entry. From a window over the Saint Denis gate he watched the Spanish garrison, three thousand strong, take the Netherland road with drums beating and colours unfurled, and responded with cheerful politeness to the Duke of Feria's cold salute. "Commend me to your master, gentlemen," said he, "but do not come back." Two years later (January 1596) Mayenne made his peace with the King, and the wars of religion were over.

*Forgive and forget* was now Henry's motto;<sup>1</sup> he forgave his enemies and forgot his friends with almost equal celerity. The country, groaning already under an unbearable load of taxation, was crushed yet lower for the benefit of the reconciled Leaguers. Mayenne and his nephew, Charles of Guise, each received between three and four million livres, with the governments of Burgundy and Provence; the Duke of Lorraine was paid the same amount; Epernon, before laying down his arms, modestly

<sup>1</sup> "Je veux tout pardonner, tout oublier."

stipulated for the governments of Périgord, Saintonge, and the Limousin. Nor were the smaller men forgotten. Brissac was given a marshal's bâton and six hundred thousand livres; Villeroi three hundred thousand, Vitry a hundred thousand: Villars and his relations made three millions by the sale of Rouen. The sum-total paid to the Leaguers in recompense of their tardy submission is reckoned by Sully at thirty-two millions.<sup>1</sup> When Henry entered Paris, he was received by Brissac the governor, and L'Huilier, the provost of the merchants. "Il faut rendre à César ce qui est à César," observed Brissac complacently. "Le lui *rendre*, ne pas le lui *vendre*," suggested L'Huilier, whose hands were clean. The King pretended not to hear the remark.

While honours and wealth were being thus freely lavished upon the men who had successfully defied the King, it was natural to enquire what were the rewards reserved for those who had served him not less successfully. Towards them Henry continued to pursue his usual thrifty policy; if fidelity did not depend on reward, why reward it? Some of the Huguenots received adequate acknowledgments, but before we accept them "as a decisive index of the treatment of the Protestants before the Edict of Nantes,"<sup>2</sup> their peculiar circumstances must be considered. Lesdiguières, indeed, was given the

<sup>1</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.*, and Groulart, *Voyages en Cour*, chap. vii. M. Martin reckons the livre (or franc) of that time to equal nearly three of the present day; M. Poirson reckons it higher.

<sup>2</sup> Meaux, *Les luttes religieuses en France, au 16<sup>me</sup> siècle* p. 289.

lieutenancy of Dauphiné; he was in possession, and it would have taken an army to displace him.<sup>1</sup> Sancy was placed at the head of the finances; he was already within measurable distance of his third change of creed. Bouillon was made a marshal, and La Trémoille's duchy of Thouars was raised to a duchy-peerage;<sup>2</sup> it was desirable to conciliate the owner of Sedan and the "King of Poitou." Sully's financial genius made him indispensable to Henry, and since he was not the man to work without wages, his wages were paid. But what of the others who had done their work without pausing to exact its value in advance,—what of La Noue, the Bayard of his generation; of Duplessis, the wise and steadfast friend of five-and-twenty years; of Châtillon, who turned the tide of battle at Arques; of a thousand others who had followed the banner of Navarre through cloud and sun? In 1596 Duplessis despaired of being able to meet his creditors' claims, so heavily had he encumbered his estates during the war.<sup>3</sup> When La Noue fell fighting for the King

<sup>1</sup> Lesdiguières sent his secretary to Paris to announce the capture of Grenoble, and to request the governorship of the place. The council at once refused the request, and the secretary departed, but presently returned. "Gentlemen," said he, "your unexpected decision made me forget a part of my message; I was to say, if you held it imprudent to give Grenoble to my master, that it would be well to consider by what means you will take it from him." "The little man is right," said Biron; and the secretary went back to Dauphiné with the governor's commission in his pocket.—D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*

<sup>2</sup> Claude de la Trémoille, Duc de Thouars, born 1566, married a daughter of the Prince of Orange, and was the father of the famous Charlotte, Countess of Derby: he died in 1604.

<sup>3</sup> "Vous scavez qu'au bout de 25 ans—et quels ans, pour la pluspart!—je me retire sans acquisition, sans bastiment, sans office ni bénéfice, comme si c'était le jubilé de mon service. Désespoir à qui n'aurait servi qu'aux hommes

in Brittany, his son had to sell his little patrimony to pay his father's debts, and was left penniless.<sup>1</sup> Châtillon<sup>2</sup> died at thirty-four, leaving his children little but the pattern of a most heroic life; when his son was killed (at eighteen) at the siege of Ostend, where he was commanding a French regiment, Henry was urged to do something for the boy's mother and brothers, whose means were extremely slender; but in vain.<sup>3</sup> Gaunt and scarred and threadbare, the laughing-stock of the courtiers, the old Huguenot soldiers were to be seen hanging about the corridors of the Louvre, pressing the treasurer for the little pensions long since due to them, and returning empty-handed to their ruined granges and their barren fields to brood darkly on the forgetfulness of princes; "for either by the misfortune of the time or from ingratitude," says the Catholic royalist, De Thou, "the royal treasury was never open to pay the debts that had been incurred in the King's service."<sup>4</sup> A sum of a hundred and fifty thousand livres, which was distributed in donations to old soldiers and servants, was bestowed in the greatest secrecy, and is entered in Sully's accounts under another head, lest the

Mais j'ai servi à Dieu et son loyer ne manque pas."—To Loménie, 15th May, 1600, *Mém. et Lettres*.

<sup>1</sup> On the eve of the assault of Lamballe, in which he was mortally wounded (Aug. 1591), he picked a sprig from a laurel bush and fastened it in his helmet. "Look, cousin," he said to his companion, "this is the only reward you and I need look for—and it is the one best suited to our trade."—La Noue, *Mém.*, Petitot, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> In Oct. 1591. There is a touching letter from his wife, about her difficulties, in Delaborde's *Henri de Coligny*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.* vol. iv. p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> De Thou, *Hist.* vol. xiii. book 22.



Catholics should feel aggrieved by this excessive generosity.<sup>1</sup>

To the Huguenots the King's abjuration came as the crowning misfortune of a struggle in which misfortunes had always been numerous enough. It was in itself a proof of the overmastering force of that great Church whose hostility they had challenged, and their position was already so insecure that they could not see it weakened without dismay. The July Edict of 1585, which had decreed the total extermination of the Reformed, was not revoked until 1591, two years after Henry's accession; the new Edict which granted the Huguenots the same measure of freedom which they had obtained from Henry III. at the Peace of Bergerac (1577), was not registered by the Parliament of Paris till February 1595, and more than one of the provincial parliaments flatly refused to register it at all, while many of the cities which surrendered to the King did so on conditions which made it a dead letter. The Peace of Bergerac had granted the Huguenots the right of worship in the faubourgs of one town in each bailliage, and admission to all offices, all schools and hospitals; but at least forty towns now stipulated, in their conditions of surrender, for the entire exclusion of the Religion from their faubourgs and bailliages; Epernon was allowed to prohibit it throughout Provence, and places which had remained loyal talked of claiming the same privilege. In many places the smallest offices were closed against the Reformed, if

<sup>1</sup> *As menus plaisirs, Econ. Roy.* vol. iii. p. 32.

a member of Parliament became a Huguenot, his seat was declared vacant, the sale and reading of Protestant books was forbidden, and parents who considered the education of their children a sacred and primary duty, saw them excluded from schools and colleges. Nor were these infractions of the edict due to popular fanaticism; they were part of the policy deliberately adopted and systematically carried out by the agents and representatives of the Crown.<sup>1</sup>

There was only one thing which could have reassured the Huguenots, one pledge which could have quieted the suspicions which years of incessant peril had kept restlessly awake. Their fate depended entirely upon the personal attitude of the King, and if they could have been absolutely confident in his justice, some melancholy pages in their history and his would never have been written. But while everyone loved Henry, no one trusted him; and those who knew and loved him best trusted him least. Every one was aware that he had yet to buy the Pope's absolution; at whose expense was the purchase to be made? Supposing it was not to be obtained except in exchange for a new war of religion, it seemed to the Reformed that "the same impulse which had pushed the King down the slope and over the precipice of conversion, might push him down the slope and over the precipice of persecution."<sup>2</sup> From Huguenot to Catholic, they argued, is a longer

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém. et Lettres*, vol. ii. p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*

step than from Catholic to crusader. "At first," says Duplessis, describing to the King the apprehensions of his old comrades, "this will be against your kindly nature . . . but you have gone far and they will force you to go farther. You must have peace at any price."<sup>1</sup> And if the warning words of Henry's faithful adviser and constant apologist are pronounced merely an instance of the feverish imagination of the discontented Huguenots, a reference to Sully's memoirs<sup>2</sup> will show how strongly the same belief was shared by that shrewd and cool observer whom no one can accuse of exaggerated anxiety as to the welfare of the Reformed Church. Those modern writers who hold that the well-known breadth of Henry's religious opinions should have been recognised as a sufficient safeguard against any intolerant legislation, have lost sight of a fact which was plainly visible to the sixteenth century; of the difference, namely, between the spirit which holds all religion sacred and would persecute none, and the spirit which holds no religion sacred and may therefore persecute any. In Henry's profound theological indifference, the Huguenots discovered a danger and not a defence.

To all the complaints of the Reformed Henry had but one answer: he would look into their affairs and place them on a better basis when he had leisure; in the meantime, instead of harassing him by their perpetual demands, he entreated them to be patient,

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém. et Lettres*, vol. ii. p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Econ. Roy.* ed. Petitot, vol. ii. p. 97.

tranquil—above all, loyal. Exhortations to loyalty lost something of their force from the lips of one who had spent a good deal of his life in arms against his sovereign; it was not easy to be tranquil when nothing but the King's goodwill, perhaps less than that, stood between them and ruin; and how long had they not been patient already! "We have no objection," said Duplessis, "to the fatted calf being killed for the returning prodigals: we only protest against being sacrificed to form a part of the feast."<sup>1</sup> But Henry's position was, in fact, as uneasy as theirs; his finances, which Sully had not yet taken in hand, were in a desperate condition; he had the Spanish war on his hands, the matter of his absolution was still unsettled, and he was distracted and hampered at every turn by the mutual jealousies of his Catholic and Reformed subjects. He stood between a triumphant and tyrannical majority, and a minority whom it was impossible to crush and difficult to conciliate. The Huguenot party had never yet yielded to intimidation; and certainly their address to the King at the close of the Assembly at Nantes (1593), shortly after his conversion, showed no trace of a pacificatory intention. They thanked him coldly for his affectionate assurances that he had not forgotten them. "It would have been hard, indeed impossible, Sire, for you to have effaced so soon from your memory those who are graven on it as with a diamond, by perils and persecutions endured together, by the joy of many common deliverances. . . . The

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis to Morlas, *Mém. et Lettres*, 20th March 1594.

recollection of these things follows you still and goes with you everywhere; it interrupts your most important affairs, your most ardent delights, your deepest slumber, to show you to yourself not as you are to-day but as once you were. . . . They may boast of having your body; your soul, which is free, is still ours. . . . But let them not look for any more patience from us; we shall ask them eye for eye and tooth for tooth. . . . If they proscribe us, we shall proscribe them.”<sup>1</sup>

D'Aubigné had early thrown in his lot with those whom Sully denounces as belonging “not to the Reformed religion but to the Huguenot faction,” and he had attached himself closely to La Trémoille, who shared the leadership of the party with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Bouillon, formerly the Vicomte de Turenne.<sup>2</sup> He could have taken no step more distasteful to Henry, who had a personal dislike to La Trémoille, and who regarded both the great nobles with a mistrust which in Bouillon's case, at least, was fully justified.<sup>3</sup> He blamed d'Aubigné hotly for associating himself with those whom he considered as little better than enemies in disguise. D'Aubigné, on his part, could not

<sup>1</sup> Colbert MSS., quoted in Capefigue, *La Ligue et La Réforme*, vol. vii. p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Bouillon's second wife was one of the Nassau princesses—a daughter (as was the Duchess de la Trémoille) of William of Orange.

<sup>3</sup> It was chiefly owing to Bouillon's persuasions that the Huguenots, as a party, made no response to Henry's appeal for help to recover Amiens from the Spaniards. No provocation could justify so shamefully unpatriotic a decision; the fact that the Huguenots were at the siege in large numbers and that the Huguenot regiment of Navarre “did most of the work,” does not exonerate the party leaders.

forgive the King's conversion ; he was (whatever has been said to the contrary) no fanatic, he did not hold a change of religion to be invariably wrong ; but he did hold that such a step should not be prompted either by fear or interest, emphatically not by the latter. But while he accounted the King guilty of lowering the ethical standard of the country for his own convenience, Henry was not the object of his most scathing criticism. He believed that the King had been frightened into his new creed, and with his anger there was mingled a wistful regret that the bravest of men should have been betrayed into that mournful plight ; but for the numerous gentlemen who hastened to compliment the sovereign by following his example, whom Henry watched with a half-mocking, half-mournful cynicism,<sup>1</sup> he knew no sentiment but that savage contempt which finds brutal expression in his satire, *The Confessions of Sancy*. Under these circumstances he was not likely to be a *persona grata* at court ; and before long he turned his back altogether on the capital and was only heard of there from time to time as figuring conspicuously in the Huguenot assemblies, fanning with his dangerous eloquence the embers of discontent and impatience. He was soon nicknamed the Scape-goat, for it was said that all the sins of his

<sup>1</sup> " Why are you here ? " Henry asked of a Huguenot gentleman whom he saw at Mass.

" I do as you do, Sire," said the courtier.

" Oh, I see—you too have some crown to gain."—L'Estoile, *Journal*, Feb. 1594.

And when Sancy abjured, " he shed a great many tears . . . at which the King laughed, saying there was nothing left to him now but to turn Turk,"—*Ibid.* 1597.



party were laid on his head. Even among his fellows he had many enemies ; he was as little disposed to overlook their failings as those of their opponents, he met errors and infirmities with unsparing ridicule. Hated by many and feared by more, he went his own way, solitary and embittered, taking a fierce pride in the reproaches and accusations which assailed him. They were fools, he once said, who endeavoured to rob him of his good name, " for the key of the temple of honour hangs at my own belt."

At last the King was reported to have declared that he must find the means of ridding himself of this disturbing element, and it was further suggested that d'Aubigné's fiery zeal for the cause was partly due to the consciousness that he had offended past forgiveness, and dared not show his face at court again. The threat came to d'Aubigné's ears and it drove him forthwith from Poitou to La Fère in Picardy, which Henry was then besieging. He alighted at the lodging of the Duchess of Beaufort, where his appearance created some consternation among his friends, who begged him to remount and begone, because the King was very angry with him ; while others suggested that he would be gratified by finding d'Aubigné under arrest on his arrival. D'Aubigné paid no heed to anything that was said. He stationed himself on the steps of the house and stood there, stern and silent, till late in the evening the royal coach drove up ; as he moved into the glare of the torches Henry's quick eye

recognised him at once. "Why, here is Monseigneur d'Aubigné!" he cried, and, springing out, to the amazement of the lookers-on, who had expected a very different scene, he kissed him, and told him to help the Duchess out of the carriage and to follow him into the house. They sat together for an hour or two, but the extreme cordiality of both Henry and Gabrielle failed to penetrate the Huguenot's cold reserve. Presently the King spoke of Barrière's recent attempt to assassinate him, and showed d'Aubigné his wounded lip. "Sire," said Agrippa, "as yet you have only renounced God with your lips and He has pierced your lip only. Should the day ever come when you renounce Him from your heart, He will pierce your heart."

"Oh, a fine word!" cried the Duchess, "but it should not have been said."

"You are right, madam," said d'Aubigné, "since it will avail nothing."<sup>1</sup>

The King made no answer to the bitter sentence, but he brought in his little son,<sup>2</sup> and laid the sleeping child in d'Aubigné's arm. He meant, he said, to send the boy to Saintonge as soon as he was three years old, the Huguenots should have him all for their own, they should bring him up and make a soldier of him. In spite of himself, d'Aubigné yielded at last to the frank kindness of this reception, and for a time he remained at his master's side. During

<sup>1</sup> "It was too bold a word from a subject to his sovereign, and would have been a criminal offence in any but d'Aubigné, who was free to say what he thought because the King loved him."—L'Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> The son of Henry and Gabrielle; César, Duke of Vendôme.

this visit Henry fell ill, and in one of those accesses of superstitious panic, to which his emotional nature was occasionally liable, he sent for his old friend, and desired him "by all the hard words he had ever spoken" to the King, to say whether Henry had committed the unpardonable sin. D'Aubigné explained that there were four marks by which this sin might be recognised, but they could only be discovered by the sinner himself; they parted after a long discussion, which was to be renewed on the morrow, but by the morning Henry was well again, and the subject interested him no more.

The edict of Nantes (1598) put an end to the condition of provisional tolerance which the Huguenots had so keenly resented; but in spite of the general satisfaction which this essay in religious tolerance created among the Reformed, rumours still reached Henry from time to time of doubtful intrigues in the Huguenot synods. To such whispers Henry never could turn a deaf ear.<sup>1</sup> His days of adversity had neither soured the sweetness nor dimmed the gaiety of his temper, but they had left him, as they had left his Huguenot subjects, sensitive to every breath of suspicion. He was perpetually haunted by the dread of a Protestant republic growing up within his kingdom, and he could not convince himself that he had nothing to fear from the Reformed Churches until he had ocular proof that the seductions of Biron,

<sup>1</sup> "Le Roy ne se feust jamais peu imaginer qu'il n'y eust quelque chose de vray en toutes ces accusations qu'on luy donnast pour tout certain."—*Econ. Roy.* vol. vi. p. 289.

and later, the appeals of Bouillon, had absolutely failed to shake their allegiance. There were, of course, always some malcontents clamouring for the redress of grievances and the extension of privileges, and among the six or seven names which are met with repeatedly in Sully's memoirs, that of d'Aubigné invariably appears. He is generally one of those who go "cavilling and bickering through the churches and synods, using an infinity of evil artifices, arguments, and calumnies, not only to set those of the Religion against the King, but to dispose them to take up arms openly ;"<sup>1</sup> and he, in particular, was said to have accused the King of having changed his religion that he might have more liberty to plunge into worldly pleasures. "These are the very terms," said Henry plaintively, "which d'Aubigné, that satiric tongue, made use of." When Sully, then governor of Poitou, made a tour of inspection through his province, he paid a visit to La Trémoille at Thouars, and reported to the King that d'Aubigné and a few of his friends had come some distance to meet him and escort him to the castle. This ceremonious politeness did not soothe Sully. "In my opinion they only came to learn what I meant to say to the Duke." He added that the Seigneur de Parabelle was inclined to be open and well-intentioned, but Messieurs d'Aubigné and Constant had taken care that de Parabelle should not see him alone, lest he should tell too much.<sup>2</sup>

There was, in fact, very little to tell ; and Henry's

<sup>1</sup> *Econ. Roy.* vol. v. p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 287.

terror of d'Aubigné's caustic speeches might have been allayed had he known of an incident which occurred in 1601, when Biron was hatching his abortive treason. Biron had succeeded in drawing Bouillon—to what extent is not exactly known—into his traitorous schemes. Bouillon had been born a conspirator; since his boyhood he had been constantly engaged in political intrigues; he had conspired with Alençon against Anjou, with Henry against Alençon, with Biron against Henry; and into this last enterprise he would fain have enticed the Reformed Churches. With them as accomplices Biron might have succeeded in dismembering France, instead of losing his own head. Bouillon was probably not prepared to go as far as the other traitor, but in order to feel his way he invited nine Huguenots, of whom d'Aubigné was one, to confer with him.<sup>1</sup> He informed them that he had just heard of a plot against the Religion arranged between the Kings of France and Spain and the Duke of Savoy, and his informants had proposed that the Reformed should save themselves by joining them in a counterplot which, if it succeeded, would place the Huguenots in complete possession of all the country south of the Loire, and of Lyons and Dijon besides, as cities of security. He could not, unfortunately, produce written proof of his statement, as the documents were all in the Duke of Savoy's hands, but he had no doubt of their existence. He invited his friends to express their opinion upon this startling discovery, and proposed that d'Aubigné, as

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*

a vehement partisan, should begin. He had counted, no doubt, upon his well-known antagonism to the government for a favourable opening, but his arrow flew wide of the mark. D'Aubigné began by remarking that there were three points to be considered,—Who is it that speaks? to whom is the speech addressed? and what is said? “Whose voice do we hear? the voice of those who have vainly compassed our ruin by violence and who would win us now by kindness, the motive of which they dare not own; of those who drove the King to Mass. . . . Who is the most active mover in this matter? Biron, the atheist, who has now turned bigot, who is never seen without his rosary in his hand. . . . From such as these we are divided, not by birth or complexion, but by the purity of our faith and by the honesty of our conduct. How can we cross the profound gulf that divides us and them? How can things so diverse be brought into agreement? . . . So much for the persons concerned, now for the matter before us. We are, in brief, invited to disturb the kingdom as a precaution against disturbance, to take to the water for fear of the rain. We are to give good cause to ruin us to those who would fain ruin us without cause, we are to call down upon ourselves the curse of nations beyond our borders and to arouse mortal strife within them. And on what is our action to be based? On a document whose falsehood or truth we have no means of testing. But suppose the story is true? We have heard most of it before, the only new point in the



conspiracy is that the King is said to be included in it. . . . I venture to say that if this conspiracy were, as we are assured, a month old, we should not have waited till now to hear of it, and if we conclude this pernicious design to-day some traitor will carry it to the King within a fortnight and make his private profit out of our betrayal, our accomplices will break away as buttons fly one after the other . . . and we shall be left to the horror of our own people and to the detestation of every Frenchman." The reply was final and the conference closed.

On the death of La Trémoille in 1604 the King made a new overture of reconciliation to his intractable friend. He wrote to d'Aubigné "with his own hand in his old familiar way" that he wished to see him at court, and the summons was obeyed. They were together for two months before Henry made any allusion to the past ; then as they were walking together one day in the park the King suddenly began—

"I have said nothing to you yet," said he, "of how you did your best to ruin everything in your assemblies, and only failed because I had bought all your biggest men ; there were a few poor souls among you who were really in earnest, the rest were thinking of their own purses and how they might earn my favour at your expense. I can boast that it only cost me five hundred crowns to corrupt a man of one of the best families in France."

"I know very well," returned d'Aubigné, "that all the highest in our party, except Monsieur de la

Trémoille, had sold their energies to your Majesty and were there to serve you. But I had taken the oath to the synod: I could neither forget it nor explain it away. I was there to serve the Churches of God, and with all the more ardour seeing them cast down and weakened by the loss of you, their protector,—may the merciful God never cease to be yours. And, Sire, I would rather leave your kingdom and lose my life than gain your favour by betraying my comrades.”

“Do you know the President Jeannin?” asked the King abruptly. “He carried in his brain all the affairs of the League, but I would trust you and him sooner than a good many others. I should like you to know him.”

The subject was then dropped, but when d'Aubigné was departing, after the King had taken a kind farewell of him, moved by some sudden impulse, the Huguenot came back. “As I look in your face, Sire,” he said, “my old boldness returns to me and I dare to ask of my master what a friend may ask of a friend. Tell me, how could you hate me?” The King grew pale, as he always did when deeply moved. “You loved La Trémoille too well,” he answered briefly. “But, Sire,” the other pleaded, “it was in your service we learned to be friends.” “True,” said the King, “but when I hated him you loved him still.” “Sire,” said d'Aubigné, “I was brought up at your Majesty's feet, at a time when you needed friends careless of adversity, who redoubled their affection when most you were in need of it. Bear

with us if we are slow to unlearn our lesson." The King embraced him and let him go in silence.

The next quarrel had a singular termination. The Count of Soissons was offended with d'Aubigné and requested Sully to get him shut up in the Bastille; and Madame de Châtillon, learning of it, sent for him secretly and begged him to leave the capital that very night, as his enemies were too strong to be faced. D'Aubigné did not take her advice, but after earnest prayer for divine guidance, went instead the next morning early to see the King, reminded him of his past services, and for the first time in his life requested that they should be paid by a pension. With unfeigned pleasure Henry accepted the tacit renunciation of d'Aubigné's old attitude of brusque independence; he embraced him, granted him a pension of seven thousand livres, and when the next day d'Aubigné went to the Bastille, it was not as a prisoner but as Sully's guest. The King was now growing sad and apprehensive, full of strange presentiments; he felt himself surrounded by an invisible network of treacherous attack,—nineteen attempts had been made on his life,—and he turned back instinctively to the old comrade, who was capable of everything but falsehood. During the period of royal favour which followed, d'Aubigné was created Vice-admiral of Saintonge and Poitou, and left Paris for the provinces to begin his preparation for a share in Henry's "great design." Like most of the Huguenots, he had always cherished the belief that the King, after all that had come and gone, was still their own at heart; but at their last part-

ing Henry definitely dispelled the illusion. "Deceive yourself no longer, d'Aubigné," said he; "I hold my life, temporal and spiritual, from the hands of the Holy Father, the true Vicar of God." The Huguenot said farewell to his master as to a dying man; he had no doubt that the King had pronounced his own death-sentence. Two months later he received the news that Henry had been stabbed in the throat by an assassin (14th May, 1610); he told the messenger that the murderer's poignard had pierced not the throat but the heart, and a more accurate report proved him right.

#### IV

During the ignoble years which followed the death of Henry IV., when favourites governed the Regent and no one governed France, d'Aubigné took little part in public affairs. He interested himself slightly in the intrigues of Bouillon, and joined Condé when he took up arms to prevent the Spanish marriages which so greatly alarmed the Reformed Churches; but after the peace of Loudun (1616), which he denounced as "a public market of particular infidelities and general cowardice," he retired to his government of Maillezais, where he sat solitary, watching the decay of the fabric which had been raised on the graves of martyrs and cemented with so much blood, with so many tears. The Reformation in France had had its opportunity and had missed it; he knew that he had given his life to a lost cause.

Even in his isolation d'Aubigné was a continual source of uneasiness to the government. Marie de' Medici, the Queen-Regent, made advances to him and offered him an additional pension of five thousand livres; but he refused it, preferring to be under no obligation to a government for which he entertained no respect, and the Regent retorted by refusing to continue the payment of the seven thousand livres which Henry IV. had granted him. This did not improve their relations, and although d'Aubigné declared that he had no other wish than to spend the remnant of his days in peace, no one believed him. He quarrelled with Bouillon, with Condé, with Epernon, whom he was believed to have pilloried in *Les Tragiques*; he was accused of being a republican and a revolutionary, and it was said that so long as he lived the King could not sit easy on his seat. A secret political report of 1615 describes him and his son as "daring, bold in design, powerful and persuasive in speech, the son more amiable than the father."<sup>1</sup> The allusion to his son brings us to that black chapter in his story which is inscribed with the name of Constant d'Aubigné.

By his first wife, Suzanne de Lezay, Agrippa had five children, Marie,<sup>2</sup> Louise, Constant (born about 1585), and two who died young. He was warmly attached to his daughters, especially to the eldest; but his most passionate affection was reserved for Constant,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Haag, *La France Protestante*, art. "d'Aubigné," ed. H. Bordier.

<sup>2</sup> Marie married Josué de Caumont in 1613. Louise married the Sieur d'Adde in 1610.

for the son who was to carry on the name which his father had borne unsullied through long and difficult years. He was immensely proud of the brilliant, beautiful boy, and remembering his own early advantages, he gave him an education "fitter for the son of a great noble than of a poor gentleman like myself." But as Constant grew up, he discovered an incurable taint of evil; change of schools and tutors effected no improvement; and when his education was complete, he came home to Maillezais a handsome young blackguard with charming manners. D'Aubigné had known in the course of his career almost every form of suffering—sickness and wounds, poverty and mortification, bereavement, disappointment, and neglect; it was reserved for the son in whom, with innocent exaggeration, he had recognised "one of the sublimest intellects of the century," to add to these the intolerable sting of shame. Constant did not content himself with ordinary faults, with drinking and gambling and going to Paris in his father's absence; there were soon darker tales told of him than these. He was five-and-twenty when, riding with a friend to Niort, he met a gentleman with whom he had a quarrel; Constant insulted him, forced a duel upon him there and then, and killed his man, who had no second. The story got abroad and the Poitevin gentlemen agreed that it was a very ugly incident. Constant soon furnished them with fresh matter for discussion by assisting a friend to carry off the daughter of the procureur-royal of Bordeaux from her father's house and to marry her by



force; two of the procureur's servants were killed in the struggle, and Constant and his friend were condemned to death. D'Aubigné bent his pride, went to court and begged his son's life, which was granted; he brought Constant home after a period of imprisonment at Angers, and hoping to sober him by responsibility, placed him in command of the fortress of Maillezais, retiring himself to the adjacent castle of Dognon, which he had built and fortified. The experiment did not succeed. Constant turned the place into a den of vice, and he also established a workshop from which he issued large supplies of false coin, until his father discovered his proceedings and expelled him from the place. He then conceived a design in which revenge and profit were ingeniously blended. There was talk from time to time, when the government became uneasy, of depriving d'Aubigné of his fortresses if necessary by force, but it was evident that this would be no easy matter. Maillezais and Dognon lay in the marshy delta formed by the junction of the Sèvre and the Autise, some twenty miles from the coast of Poitou, in the centre of a network of canals. The position, which commanded the approaches to La Rochelle and was accessible only by a single path, was almost impregnable; and when Epéron threatened the governor of Maillezais with the destruction of his towers, he replied composedly that those who attempted to pull down his house would do it at their own expense. Constant was aware how keenly covetous Epéron was of the place; and when his father discovered his

wrongdoings and turned him out of Maillezais, he did not scruple to lay his knowledge of the country and of the garrison at the disposal of the government.

A favourable opportunity soon occurred. His father fell ill, and Constant seized the advantage thus afforded him to lead a hundred and eighty men across the marsh; but trembling with ague, unable from weakness to stand alone, Agrippa rose from his sick-bed to confront his assailants,—an unexpected and very terrible apparition, before which Constant, who was no coward, retreated in dismay. Earlier in the same year (1619) he had committed another crime for which Agrippa had no word of blame.<sup>1</sup> He discovered that his wife, a wealthy bourgeoisie of Bordeaux, was unfaithful to him, and surprising her with her lover, he killed them both.

The government now despaired of expelling the old Huguenot by force; they reconnoitred the place carefully and decided that it would be cheaper to buy him out. Epernon offered him two hundred thousand livres for his fortresses, but the sum was refused on the ground, as d'Aubigné carefully explained to the Secretary of State, that he suspected the hand which offered it of not being faithful to the King's service. He added that "since a good Frenchman is not the less bound to be loyal because he has been robbed, despoiled, and ill-treated," he had sold his fortresses to the Duke of Rohan, being able to find no other equally loyal purchaser, for half the amount. He had long been meditating a de-

<sup>1</sup> Lavallée, *La famille de Madame de Maintenon*.

parture to Geneva, where he had been assured that he would be warmly welcomed, and after joining, merely out of friendship to Rohan, in the futile little revolt which ended with the "Queen's Peace," he decided that it was time to be gone. He refused to join the other rebels in asking pardon ; he had done nothing, he maintained, contrary to his conscience, and he had never yet sought forgiveness except from God and his lady. He was naturally, therefore, excluded from the amnesty which followed the peace, and a warrant was issued against him, but he crossed France in safety, arriving on the 1st of September, 1620, at the gates of the city upon which he had turned his back, a wild and wayward boy, fifty years before.

"My Lords of Geneva" received him with all possible honour ; the First Syndic paid him at once a visit of ceremony, he was given the seat of honour in St. Peter's, and a house was hired for him at the city's expense. His experience in military matters made him a valued guest in that often threatened town, and marks of high respect were accorded to him by the other Protestant cantons. He was on the eve of marrying an Italian lady, Renée Burlamachi, when he heard that he had been condemned in France to capital punishment, but this did not prevent the marriage from being concluded. In the manor-house of Crest, about five miles from the city, he lived very happily with Renée, employing his leisure in writing his memoirs and satires, and in correspondence with his distant friends. His advice was sought upon an immense variety of subjects,—

on witchcraft and literature, on military etiquette, on engineering problems, and on theology, and his answers are generally pointed, sympathetic, and sagacious. His letter<sup>1</sup> to his daughters on the higher education of women is an interesting example. In reply to their petition to be allowed to learn what their brother learned, he sends them a little handbook of logic in French, "which M. de Bouillon calls *Logic for Ladies*;" reminding them, however, that it is dangerous for women who have husbands to reason too well; but he has still, he says, the little Greek St. Basil which had belonged to his own mother, and he goes on to recall with admiration the learned women of his own day,—Elizabeth of England, Olympia Morata, Margaret of Navarre, "Loyse Labbé—the Sappho of her time," and Loyse Sarrasin, whose gentle memory he still holds in his heart. He concludes by admitting that it is a difficult question, but he is on the whole of opinion that while learning is the fitting ornament of a great lady, girls of his daughters' rank are more apt to abuse than to use it. An ardent love of books leads a woman sometimes to neglect her house-keeping, and to despise the husband who is less cultured than herself; and in any case it generally has to give way to other occupations. "The nightingale sings no more when there are little ones in the nest."

Across the even tenor of his life at Geneva there still lay the black shadow of Constant's sins. He came to Geneva in 1626, professing deep repent-

<sup>1</sup> The letter is undated, but must have been written when his daughters were young.

ance, and his father wrote joyfully to tell his friends — “the lost is found, the dead has come back to life.” Agrippa then procured him an appointment in Sweden, where he hoped he might begin a new life ; but when all the arrangements were made Constant explained that he had no intention of going to Sweden, and offered instead to go to England. D'Aubigné refused to give him letters of introduction to any of his English political correspondents, for it was a critical time for the French Protestants, and though he had forgiven his son, he did not trust him. Not discouraged by his father's want of confidence, Constant went to London, where he represented himself as a secret agent from La Rochelle ; he had brought no letters, he said, for the roads were dangerous, but every one knew his father's name. Audacious and insinuating, he succeeded in learning a good deal of the negotiations then in progress between Buckingham and the Rochelais : on his way back to Geneva he spent a night in Paris and sold his information to Richelieu.

Agrippa had pardoned every fault against himself, against the name whose honour he had held so dear ; the betrayal of the Cause was a sin beyond forgiveness. “It is this,” he writes with piteous simplicity, “that has broken the friendship between my son and me.” He refused to see Constant, who was protesting fresh contrition, or to open his letters, and to a friend who interceded for him he replied that he had been forgiving his son for ten years, “and I am still ready to forgive him all that concerns me only ; I pray for him still ; he will easily make peace with me when

he has made peace with God." But he held in his heart that "for leprous bodies and for traitorous souls there is no cure." In a letter of condolence to Rohan on the death of his son, a young man of great promise, he says that for his part he can never esteem the death of the young altogether a misfortune. "God has visited me in the loss of two children, but I have wept for the living as I never wept for the dead." From time to time Constant still expressed a wish to throw himself at his father's feet and to implore his blessing; and he never had any lack of blameless friends—his stepmother was one of them—<sup>1</sup> who were always ready to lend him money and to believe in his longings to reform; but in the meantime he was ranging light-heartedly between the hostile creeds, being received first into one fold and then into the other, as suited his convenience and his purse. In September, 1627, he was sentenced for some political offence to a long term of imprisonment. "I see," he wrote from Château Trompette, where he spent the first part of it, "that God takes pleasure sometimes in punishing us by false accusations, for our real crimes." No one found it easy to believe ill of Constant except behind his back, and in three months' time his poetry, his lute-playing, his remorse, and the chivalrous grace of his bearing, had captivated the young daughter of Pierre de Cardilhac, the governor of the castle. They were married in the chapel of the castle in December, 1627, and Françoise d'Aubigné, afterwards

<sup>1</sup> In her will Renée Burlamachi left him 3000 florins. "Je prie M. le baron, fils de feu M. d'Aubigné, de prendre ce petit présent en bonne part pour un tesmoignage de mon affection."



Madame de Maintenon, was one of the children of this miserable union.<sup>1</sup> Fifty years after Agrippa's death his grand-daughter wrote: "The King (Henry IV.'s grandson) begins to think seriously of his salvation and of that of his subjects; if God preserves him to us, there will soon be but one religion in the kingdom." In 1685 the repeal of the Edict of Nantes fulfilled her hopes and completed the ruin of the cause to which Agrippa d'Aubigné had consecrated his life.

D'Aubigné died on the 9th of May, 1630. "Knowing that his end was at hand," says his wife, "he raised himself on his couch, and with a very serene and joyous countenance" repeated half aloud the words of the battle-hymn which had rolled heavenward from the green slopes of Coutras on the great day when he rode to victory with his King:—

Voici l'heureuse journée  
Que Dieu a faite à plein désir.

"And so he entered into the true rest of God."

The city of Geneva buried her illustrious guest in the cloister of St. Peter's. The spot is no longer known, but a marble tablet upon the wall of the church, an aisle's length from the tomb of his friend Rohan, still commemorates the last of the old Huguenots.

## V

It has been said<sup>2</sup> that if ever an age could be personified in an individual, Agrippa d'Aubigné might stand as a living type of the sixteenth century; and he certainly embodies with extraordinary fidelity

<sup>1</sup> Born at Niort in 1635.

<sup>2</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries de Lundi*.

the energy which is one of the characteristics of that epoch. During a career so full of fighting and of politics that no space seemed to be left for any other occupation, d'Aubigné found time for the work of an historian and of a poet; and although he cared less for literary fame than for military glory, it is as a writer, not as a soldier, that he earned his enduring renown.<sup>1</sup>

His great work is his *Universal History*, of which two volumes were printed in 1616 and 1618; license to print the third was refused, and when in spite of this prohibition it was published in 1619, the Parliament of Paris condemned the whole work to be burned by the public executioner. The second edition was published in Geneva in 1626. The study of these volumes (which would be more correctly described as a history of the French Wars of Religion) is absolutely essential to a right understanding of the epoch which produced them, of the spirit which informed the men who fought unawares the battle of religious freedom in France.

The historian sets out with a lofty conception of the duty before him; he justly appreciates the seriousness of his task, the penalty of failure; he recognises also that he cannot please everybody, either in manner or in matter. Some readers, he says, like a flowery style; others will have it concise, bristling with points; some demand soft poetic phrases, and others are particular as to the length of the periods; one can never have enough of letters and speeches, another

<sup>1</sup> "D'Aubigné, qui est bon pour la plume et le poil, bon capitaine et soldat, très sçavant et très éloquent, et bien disant s'il en fut onc."—Brantôme, vol. v. p. 434, ed. Lalanne.

turns the page quickly to get to the fighting. But about the general run of critics he does not intend to trouble his head; the work is dedicated to posterity, and to the judgment of posterity he is content to leave "this picture of a calamitous time, full of ambitious projects, of singular fidelity and infidelity, of conspicuous virtue and of infamous cowardice; of changes so unlooked for that it will be easy to gather from this narrative the true fruit of all history, which is, to discern in the weakness and madness of men the judgment and the strength of God." Turning to consider his qualifications for his task, he claims, at least, the merits of impartiality and careful research. It was not, in his judgment, the historian's business<sup>1</sup> to draw conclusions or to point morals; he has only to place the facts as openly and as exactly as possible before the reader, and to let him discover the moral of the story for himself if he can. He has taken, he assures us, every care not to mislead; he has questioned witnesses in every rank, he has copied documents, he has borrowed, as was the fashion of his time, what he could not obtain first hand from the pages of his predecessors in the field, and he has visited many of the scenes he describes to collect fuller details. "I may have put falsehoods in my book," says he, "but I have not lied."<sup>2</sup> For the rest, if he has left out things that should have been put in, those

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Univ.* Pref. Cf. Duplessis: "J'ai autrefois pensé que l'Histoire qui est comme un Rapporteur de procès, en doit laisser le jugement libre aux juges sans leur préjudicier par une première voix." De Thou took the same view.

<sup>2</sup> "Et en tout ce que j'appren d'autrui, il m'est peu advenir d'avoir dit mensonge, mais non pas d'avoir menti."

are to blame who would not take the trouble to tell him what he could not discover for himself.

To a great extent d'Aubigné's claims are justified. It is hardly for the man who writes the history of his own generation to decide with justice between conflicting claims, to discern the true issues of the movement in which he is engaged; the field does not become visible till the smoke of the battle has cleared away. All we can ask is that he shall be more interested in telling the truth than in defending his party, and that he shall not measure his friends by one standard and his foes by another. In this respect few writers have more earnestly striven to do their duty than Agrippa d'Aubigné. It would be untrue to say that he constantly maintains the cool and impartial attitude at which he aimed. But throughout his history he puts upon his prejudices the severest restraint, he scrupulously abstains from those scathing denunciations which came so readily to his pen, and he goes out of his way to relate facts to the credit of his mortal antagonists. Montgomery's death, for instance, was generally reported to have been a violation of the conditions of his surrender, but d'Aubigné assures us that this was not the case; Montgomery bargained for the lives of his garrison, but consented to refer his own fate to the King. "We have seen enough of perfidious actions in France," says he; "there is no need to invent more." When Joyeuse massacred a large number of prisoners in cold blood at Saint-Eloi, he was indignantly condemned by the Reformed as guilty of an act of

barbarous treachery; d'Aubigné explains that they were unjust; the action was barbarous, but there was no treachery in it. After the victory of Coutras he is careful to describe the splendid courage of the defeated foe: "It is hardly possible to believe how few of their main body were taken prisoners or slaughtered off the field of battle." And he, I think, alone reveals the discreditable fact that Joyeuse was shot by a Huguenot after he had surrendered. In his account of the Saint Bartholomew he strictly adheres to his rule and does not pronounce a word of condemnation upon the authors of the massacre; there was capital to be made by a party writer out of the cold-blooded murder of Condé, a prisoner of war after the battle of Jarnac, but d'Aubigné makes no use of the incident. He refuses to speak of the crimes committed by the Spaniards in America, "because I cannot enter upon this discourse in a spirit of moderation." If we turn to the judgments passed in his pages upon individuals, we find the same evident desire to be just, and we can best measure his self-control by comparing the description of the same person given in his poem of *Les Tragiques* and in his *History*. The poet has set up Henry III., for instance, as a mark for the world's scorn, branded him with infamy, lashed him with terrible invective; but the historian does not allow his opinion of Henry's private character to influence his verdict on the king. "And this," says he, "was the end of Henry III., a lover of letters, liberal beyond most kings; courageous in his youth and a favourite with all; in his age beloved by few; who had royal

very  
effeminate  
drag  
queen

qualities ; was desired as king before he came to the throne, and would always have been judged worthy of the kingdom if he had not reigned.<sup>1</sup> So much a good Frenchman may say of him." D'Aubigné had always counted Catherine de' Medici as his worst enemy ; of her he observes, "She had put off the fears and weaknesses common to her sex to put on the courage and prudence of men ; there was nothing mediocre either in her virtues or in her vices." Are either of these verdicts immoderately severe? And how does this fierce partisan of the Reformed speak of Mayenne, the head of the League? "The chief of the League," he says, "having made his peace, was one of the most upright advisers with regard to the demands [of the Reformed]. It was he who in the Council blamed the refusal of peace to those to whom he attributed the ruin of his own party."

The *History* is composed on a plan which its author regarded with some complacency. Each of the three folio volumes is divided into five books, and each book closes with an edict or a treaty. It was not a very happy arrangement, and the author, for all his pride in the plan, was not quite comfortable within these neatly marked confines. An edict or a treaty could not in the nature of things be reckoned upon invariably at the right point, and sometimes the intervening chapters are too empty and sometimes too full. Something too is wanting to the chronological order of the narrative ; much of it was written during his campaigns, on horseback, or in the trenches, and it

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus on Otho : *Capax imperii, nisi imperasset.*



was difficult under the circumstances to be systematic. Sometimes he happened to lose a page of notes, sometimes he failed in obtaining an authentic account of a "notable combat" just when he wanted it, and it had to be inserted later on. He frequently forgets that he is a historian and not a chronicler ; he has the quick curiosity, the attentive ear, of Froissart and Joinville, but the quality of proportion is often overlooked. He stands too close to the events he describes ; he yields too easily to his love of feats of arms and hazardous enterprises ; he has a chivalrous regard for the obscure brave, who lived valiantly and died unhonoured, and he is bent in doing what in him lies to preserve their names from oblivion. But alas ! the names are numerous and the space limited, and we are forced to wade through pages of insignificant skirmishes, escalades, and assaults which are of no possible value, while occurrences on which light is still needed are omitted. It is magnanimous, but it is not history.

D'Aubigné has been accused of marring his work by his lack of modesty,—worse still, of being niggardly of praise except for his own performances ; but those who find this latter fault in his pages have not studied them very closely. He is certainly fully convinced of his own value, he is himself the hero of too many of those remarkable exploits which follow each other in rapid succession, and his attempts to conceal his identity under such terms as "an equerry of the King" and "a certain maître de camp" are not very successful, and were perhaps not very sincere. "*Son histoire est vraiment la sienne,*" says an unkind seventeenth-century

critic; "elle est toute de lui." Saintonge is not far from Gascony, and not a little of that Gascon bravado which is unmercifully caricatured in *The Adventures of Baron Fœnesté* tinges the Baron's creator "Vanity is the fifth element," said Biron, "and the one in which soldiers live," and d'Aubigné was before everything a soldier. Moreover, modesty was not one of the virtues largely cultivated in the sixteenth century, and very few of d'Aubigné's contemporaries evince that desire to efface themselves upon which the better taste of a later age insists. But if he has much that is good to say of himself, he has much to say of others, and very generously it is said. Take, as an example, the tribute he pays to the Roman Catholic magistrate De Thou, his far greater fellow-labourer in the historical field. De Thou's magnificent work has been often and justly praised, but seldom more warmly than by his rival of the opposite camp. D'Aubigné mentions (in the Preface to his *History*) two or three defects which he finds in De Thou's volumes, among them the prejudice manifested against the house of Lorraine. "But these," he says, "are but small warts on a face worthy of all love and honour," and they do not touch the fact that De Thou is "the most powerful mind that France has ever produced. . . . Foreigners, and especially Germans, are accustomed to say to our reproach, that though there is something subtle and delicate in French writers, they never produce work displaying sustained force, even temper, and powerful and solid judgment. But all these qualities are united in this incomparable author. In him you will find as

much interest as in Guicciardini, penetration as marvellous as that of Macchiavelli, and greater breadth than in Sleidan." Is not this praise enough?

D'Aubigné's style might be criticised in the terms in which Montaigne describes the French tongue. "There is in it plenty of stuff, but it needs fashioning."<sup>1</sup> His composition is difficult and confused, entirely wanting in the *netteté*, in the limpid clearness which we have come to consider inseparable from French prose. His sentences are often involved, his pages are encumbered by uninteresting details, and they often bristle with obsolete military terms well calculated to trip up any reader. And yet what results are achieved with this rude instrument! He forces his way through brake and brier, dragging the tired student behind him, till suddenly the landscape opens out before us and we see what no one but d'Aubigné can show us, what few but d'Aubigné saw. For he has the painter's vision,<sup>2</sup> the painter's touch, and his tints have not faded. The events he sets before us are as vivid in their colouring, as clear in their outline, as if the mist of three hundred years did not roll between us and them. The masterly scene in which Coligny's wife determines him to take up arms is too well known to be quoted again;<sup>3</sup> very effective, in a totally different way, is this obscure incident in the siege of Rouen. The garrison, to the

<sup>1</sup> "En nostre langue, je trouve assez d'étoffe mais un peu faute de façon."

■ "La postérité lui saura gré surtout d'être un peintre."—Sainte-Beuve.

<sup>3</sup> "Shakespeare or Corneille," says Sainte-Beuve, "could not have told it more movingly."

number of some five hundred or more, had made an unexpected sortie, and there were only eighty of Henry's English auxiliaries and a score of Frenchmen at hand to meet them. The King was on the opposite bank of the river with d'Aubigné and the Welshman, Roger Williams, who, as d'Aubigné notes, was "one of the most valiant men in the world," and he suddenly perceived what was happening. The ford was a hundred feet higher up, and to save a few moments he dashed down the slope on which they stood and across the weir before them. "We dared not follow him," says the narrator frankly. How visible yet is that single rider spurring across the foaming dam, and beyond him the eighty Englishmen moving to meet the overwhelming odds, "tossing their caps in the air and catching them as they went." Or consider his picture of the twenty-two men,—he regrets that he cannot give us all their names,—besieged in a country house by a royalist company. They had held it for some hours when the enemy set fire to the building and, moved by the courage of the defenders, pressed them to save their lives by surrender. The house was in flames, the floor burning beneath their feet, when, obstinately deaf to the generous solicitations of the besiegers, the Huguenots were seen to clasp hands all round for a moment before they dropped one by one with uplifted muskets into the flames. D'Aubigné does not tell us the story : he shows us the scene. There is excellent description also in the narrative of the taking of Cahors, of the besiegers approaching the rocky fastness under cover of the

darkness, the crash of the thunder mingling with the crash of the petard that blew in the gates, the six days of furious fighting in the narrow streets, the King in his doublet like his men, his feet torn and bleeding from the stones, animating every one with his presence, calling every man by his name; "under any other captain," says d'Aubigné, "the besiegers would have been easily flung over the wall." In one of his private letters he tells the story of De Lorges (Montgomery's father) and the glove with a concise vigour which leaves Schiller's poem far behind. How effective are some of his flamboyant phrases! "No bleached ambition, but a flaming courage." "Famine and plague marching to the beat of the drum and pausing for no bugle-call to strike." "France needed us at Tours [he is alluding to the truce between Henry III. and the Huguenots] . . . we sprang to the help of our enemies, and as we faced the Leaguers we felt behind us the bayonets on which our own blood was rusting."

Henry is, of course, the central figure of his *History*, not Henry of France, whom he had only watched from a distance with yearning and defiant eyes, but Henry of Navarre, "the peerless prince," who "filled the century with events and conflicts." The work begins at the King's birth, his life is the thread on which the whole narrative hangs; the author may wander from him, but he always returns to his real subject, the story of one who with all his faults—and d'Aubigné had a terrible eye for faults—was still for him, "the greatest king who has girt on sword for eight hundred years." "This," says he, "is the heart of



my History." Henry IV. is one of those characters which fascinate every one who approaches them; the magic spell which he laid upon his contemporaries is upon their descendants still. No one felt the power of it more strongly than d'Aubigné; he was always striving to wrest himself free of it, and always failing in the attempt. He did not respect the King; on the contrary, the lover of lost causes regarded with something not far removed from contempt the man of subtle brain and easy conscience, who always knew when circumstances were too strong for him, and who never wasted his strength in an unavailing struggle. "Necessity," said Henry, "which is Time's law, constrains me now to say one thing and now another."<sup>1</sup> "Our fathers have taught us from the stake," was Agrippa's favourite reflection, "that there is no constraint for him who knows how to die."<sup>2</sup> Yet with this sentiment there was blended a most sincere and passionate admiration for the courage, the vivacity, the unerring penetration, the fine temper, which he had studied so closely. After Henry's death d'Aubigné wrote an epitaph for him in verse, "and if," he says, "by reason of their author's disgrace, my verses are rejected at the tomb in St. Denis, they will not be refused a place on that other which is built of that durable marble, which is the eternal remembrance of posterity"; and indeed the lines are a fine tribute to him who "fought without fear, conquered without bitterness, and ruled without a favourite,"—the poet's

<sup>1</sup> In Ranke, bk. vii. chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Seneca, "Qui mori scit, cogi nescit," so often quoted by Montaigne.



“clear star of fire,”<sup>1</sup> the soldier’s “incomparable leader,” “*mon Roy, sans pareil*.”

D'Aubigné's chief prose works, after his *History*, are his *Life* and his two satires, *The Confessions of Sancy* and *The Adventures of Baron Fæneste*. His *Life* was written at his children's request, and intended only for their reading; he tells them here “in paternal privacy many things which he could not place in his *History*, just as if they still stood listening at his knee.” Only two copies were made, and these he stipulated were never to leave the house, but the precaution was naturally vain; the manuscript found its way in course of time to the printer's hands, and was published at Cologne, as an Appendix to *Fæneste*, under the title of “Secret History of the Author.” From the charges of vindictiveness, spite, and vanity which have been brought against these reminiscences, d'Aubigné has found able defenders; he has given them a good deal to do. There are many things in the little volume which every friend of the writer would gladly erase. Small grievances are recalled which might have been forgotten, little meannesses recorded which ought to have been ignored; the deep lines bitten into the writer's soul by the King's ingratitude should surely have been softened by the touch of the great peacemakers, Death and Time.

*The Adventures of Baron Fæneste* is the longer of the two satires. The first part of it appeared in 1617 at St. Jean d'Angély, and the conclusion was added at

<sup>1</sup> “Henry, clair astre de feu.”—*Stanzas on the late King*.

Geneva, where the appearance of the book created a more unpleasant sensation than anything of the kind which had been known since Henri Estienne was censured by the Council for his *Defence of Herodotus*. The edition was suppressed, and the author was desired to produce no more such writings.<sup>1</sup> In his preface d'Aubigné explains that, "weary of grave and tragical discourses," he had sought recreation in work of a different character. It would indeed be difficult to find a greater contrast than that presented by his *Meditations on the Psalms*, which appeared in the same year, and the volume whose "blasphemies and impieties" justly scandalised the writer's kind hosts. The book consists of a long series of dialogues, in which Fœneste and Enay bear the chief part. Fœneste is a young Gascon coming home from the war, who loses himself in the neighbourhood of Niort. Here he falls in with Enay, a Huguenot gentleman, a scholar, and a man of the world, who invites the baron to his house, which is close at hand, and entertains him there very liberally. The penniless Gascon is delighted to have secured a meal and a bed, and in return he vastly amuses his entertainer, whose judicious questions are hardly required to draw his guest into a hundred ridiculous reminiscences, in which the speaker (whose Gascon pronunciation is, to the reader's exasperation, carefully reproduced) invariably figures either as knave or dupe. It has been suggested that d'Aubigné drew his own portrait in the baron's Huguenot host, but there is very little

<sup>1</sup> Sayous, *Les Ecrivains de la Réforme*.

resemblance between that sober and rather taciturn gentleman and the author. The main topic on which the conversation turns is the comparative advantage of being and appearing to be. The Gascon is all for appearances. That, he explains, is because he is a courtier, and at court no one gives a thought to anything else. In the opening chapter, as he approaches the house, he finds fault with the owner for speaking of his grounds merely as an enclosure and not as a park. "What the devil," says he, "an enclosure? I have been walking round these walls for a quarter of an hour, and you don't call it a park?" "If I did," says the other, "what would you call Monceaux or Madrid?" "Still," rejoins the Gascon, "it costs nothing to give a thing a handsome name." The adventures with which the slight framework is filled are not of an edifying kind; whether the talk turns upon the court, the church, or the camp, it overflows with that profane and scurrilous raillery to whose coarse license the sixteenth century satirist set no bounds.

*The Catholic Confession of the Sieur de Sancy* is narrower in its scope than *Fænesté*. Sancy, who had changed his creed as often as his master, was no worse than a hundred others whom d'Aubigné must have known; it was probably some personal grudge which picked out the minister of finance and set his name on this title-page. He stands here as the type of the renegade, the man who refutes the charge of inconstancy by explaining that he has always adhered to the same creed, in which there are four points—profit, honours, ease, and safety. "So long," he says,

“as I could keep these in sight and still be a Huguenot, I was a Huguenot. But when, on the contrary, I saw before me loss, shame, difficulty, and danger, it would have been inconstant not to turn. . . . *But that is disgraceful?* Not half so disgraceful as being a poor man.” The wit of the confession is more malevolent than that of the Gascon dialogue, the satire more ruthless, the coarseness more outrageous; it is difficult to comprehend how the pen which wrote the “Evening Hymn” and the beautiful little verses on the Lord’s Supper could have been guilty of producing it.

Of d’Aubigné’s early poems enough has been said; of his epic, *The Creation*, there is nothing to say except that it is incredibly dull. He takes his place among the poets as the author of *Les Tragiques*. This epic poem was begun when he was five-and-twenty, and was continued at odd times, extending over many years; but he does not seem to have had any definite idea of publishing it until his friends demanded a new work of him. “We are weary,” they said, “of books which instruct; give us something we can feel.” D’Aubigné hesitated, for he was aware that the appearance of his poem would add to his reputation of being “a turbulent republican,” for “what I say of tyrants will be taken as said of kings.” But this was not a consideration likely to deter him long, and he was certain of the audience, “fit though few,” which was the only one he coveted. He therefore collected “from behind boxes and beneath cupboards” the torn and crumpled leaves of

his manuscript, and it appeared in 1616 with a prefatory challenge to his critics :—

“For one who judges praise thy due,  
 Hundreds will doom thee to the flame ;  
 Care not ; it was my constant aim  
 To please the good and please the few.”<sup>1</sup>

We are warned at the outset of the poem what we have to expect. “The silver streams in which the Greek poets drank and bathed flow here no more ; the softly murmuring ripple of their streams clashes now upon men’s bones ; the crystal wave is reddened by the blood of our dead ; the lute tuned to my little songs is drowned in the trumpets’ blare ; here is no painted blood, no feigned slaughter ; on this sad stage Death plays his own part.” The poem is in six books. The first describes the miseries of the kingdom during the civil wars, the second and third show their origin in the vice and folly of those in authority. “I write,” he says, “as freely as they lived.” Then passes the long procession of martyrs whom Satan, in a very fine scene, has obtained leave to try to the uttermost ; and the poem closes with the Last Judgment, with the picture of the lost who suffer

“L’éternelle soif de l’impossible mort,”

and of the redeemed in that celestial country where neither Disease nor Ignorance can enter, whose blessedness Separation does not interrupt nor Forgetfulness impair.

<sup>1</sup> Et pour une âme favorable,  
 Cent te condamneront au feu ;  
 Mais c’est ton but invariable  
 De plaire aux bons et plaire à peu.  
 Pref. to *Les Tragiques*.

The poem, like the history, is a singular combination of genius and bad taste. The continuous violence of the narrative and the almost unbroken succession of dreadful images make it actually painful to read ; until nearly the end we are allowed no respite, we are spared no detail of those scenes of horror of which the soldier-poet had too often been an eyewitness. With bewildering rapidity he passes from the actual to the allegorical ; now we are shown France, wretched mother, with the two children on her breast tearing at each other and at her in mortal strife ; now we see the black reiter thundering across the sunny meadows, leaving havoc and woe behind him ; now we are in the recesses of the Louvre, and every shameful secret is discovered, every infamy dragged into the light of day ; and now in the courts of heaven to hear Justice demanding vengeance on the persecutor. The whole leaves an impression of disorder, of brutality ; the precipitation to which the author owns is evident everywhere, and his want of restraint plunges him not infrequently into positive absurdities. And yet this fevered seer, in whose ear the cries of the tortured and the bereaved are always ringing, whose eyes are half-blinded by staring on blood and flame, is, beyond all doubt, a poet ; and he has moments when the tragic intensity of his conviction forces its way to superb and adequate expression ; when we hear in the beat of his long, heroic lines a note of that immortal strain which floated half a century later from the inaccessible heights of Corneille. Here is a passage which even in translation retains something of its force. The



poet is describing the efforts of Catherine de' Medici to prop the "high house of Valois, crumbling to its fall," with the devil's aid, which she invokes continually with the help of her sorcerers. He sees her prowling by night in the churchyard, dragging the corpse from the grave, performing her hideous incantations beneath the troubled moon ; he sees her brewing her potions,—mingling the cat's head, the crow's tongue, the basilisk's eye, the bat's blood, the toad's heart, with mandragora and white hellebore, with hemlock, cypress, and rue ; and he bids her not waste her strength in these painful, unnecessary rites :—

"Toil not to win the aid thou canst compel ;<sup>1</sup>  
 What need hast thou of charms ? Within thy hand  
 Thou holdst a spell more potent and more swift  
 Than all the drugs they bring thee from afar.  
 Oft have the demons triumphed by thy means,—  
 Now is thine hour,—triumph thou over them ;  
 Vivandière of Hell, put forth thy power !  
 Recount what thou hast done, say what thou seest,  
 The victories of thy dark Florentine wiles ;  
 Point to thy handiwork ; show France in ruins ;  
 Show all the souls depraved, despairing, damned,  
 Who curse their God and thee,—say 'twas thy craft  
 Which sent these legions marching down to hell ;—  
 It will suffice ; at that imperious word  
 The infernal host shall move to do thy will."

There is in d'Aubigné's character, as in his writings, an element of incompleteness, a touch of that baffling

<sup>1</sup> "Tant d'étranges moïens tu recherches en vain ;  
 Tu en as de plus prompts en ta fatale main ;

Use de ton pouvoir ; tu peux bien triompher  
 Sur eux puisque tu es vivandière de l'Enfer. . . ."

and enigmatical quality which drags a man constantly back from the very brink of triumph ; the malice in his eyes, the irony of his smile, seem to reflect the glance with which Destiny regarded him. His genius, which might have enriched his generation, resembled a stream which, missing the right channel, wastes itself in morass and sand ; he loved his country, but many who loved her less served her better ; he is hardly to be reckoned among the truest friends of the cause for which he lived and for which he would joyfully have died. Yet through the fantastic humour, the bitter, repellent moods which partly explain the waste of brilliant gifts and lavish devotion, we may still discern the beauty of the ardent and invincible soul, who held no failure ignominious except failure in duty, and no success admirable which was not admirably achieved ; who, careless of safety and disdainful of interest, followed what he judged to be the Divine voice ; who, disillusioned and defeated, could yet read in the high aspirations of his own heart the assurance of a life to come in which reproach may be transfigured into glory. “ For those,” said he, “ who live only in the present are mercenaries hired by the day,” who have nothing to expect of the future. “ But those whose hopes embrace more than one age, are conscious already of immortality ; since to be nobly careful of a good renown, is to the faithful soul a sign and certain pledge of the resurrection.”

*Note.*—An invaluable edition of d'Aubigné's Complete Works has been edited by MM. Réaume and Caussade (Lemerre, Paris) ; the best edition of his History is that edited by M. le baron de Ruble for the Société de l'Histoire de France.

CATHERINE OF NAVARRE



## CATHERINE OF NAVARRE

IN the Hotel Condé at Paris, in June, 1572, Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, lay dying. Her foes had been many and powerful, but she came of a fighting race, and had faced them to the last with indomitable courage; and here was the end of conflict, of long years of apprehension and disappointment. "Do you weep for me?" said the pale, worn-out woman who had been called in her bright, imperious childhood the darling of kings. "You who have witnessed the miseries of my life, do you weep because God has taken pity upon me at last?"

She left behind her two children, born of her unhappy union with Antony of Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, who had been killed at the siege of Rouen in the first civil war,—Henry, now in his nineteenth year, and Catherine, five years younger. Henry had remained in Béarn when his mother came to the French court to complete the arrangements for his marriage with Margaret of Valois, the King's sister; but Catherine was with her, a delicate child, too young to be harmed by the foul moral atmosphere which Jeanne dreaded so sorely for her son. To Henry she

bequeathed all her dominions, "in testimony of the love and dutiful reverence" which the prince had always shown her, and also the diamond carcanet and the great ruby then in pledge in England; to Catherine she left all her other jewels, commending her, for the rest, to her brother's protection. "I exhort and entreat my son to take his sister, Catherine, into his care, to be her guardian and defender, to act, under God, as her father. . . . I forbid him ever to treat her with severity; on the contrary, I desire him always to be kind and gentle to her; above all, I wish her to be brought up in Béarn, and not to leave it until she is old enough to be married to a prince of her own rank and of her own religion." The executors of her will were her brother-in-law the Cardinal of Bourbon, and her friend Coligny.

Catherine had been born in Paris on the 7th of February, 1559, six months before the death of Henry II. altered the course of the French Reformation. The Queen of Navarre was an ardent disciple of Calvin, and during the civil war she shared the fortunes of her party; she and her children were often driven from Pau or Nérac to take shelter in the fortress of Navarreins, and once they only escaped capture by a rapid flight to La Rochelle. But in the midst of her innumerable anxieties she never ceased to watch with tender care over her daughter's health and education. Catherine learned Latin and Greek from the historian Palma-Cayet, literature and history from her brother's tutor, Charles Macrin, and Merlin de Vaux taught her the principles of the reformed faith;



and much of the short period of tranquillity granted to Jeanne by the peace of St. Germain (1571) was spent in planning a place in which the young princess might study or meditate undisturbed. The fantastic structure which was erected in the park of the old castle of Pau, overlooking the torrent of the Gave, was Jeanne's last gift to her little daughter, and she called it by the pretty name of Château-Chéri.

On the death of her mother, Catherine found herself abandoned to the doubtful protection of her god-mother, Catherine de' Medici, whom her mother had taught her to regard as the mortal enemy of her faith, and Jeanne's worst suspicions were amply justified a week after the marriage which had been proclaimed the symbol of reconciliation and peace. There is no record of the girl's experiences during the St. Bartholomew, but in some dark corner of the Louvre she must have awakened to hear the death-signal peal from the church tower—she must have listened, shuddering, to the flying footsteps which echoed down the long corridors slippery with blood. She was included in the abjuration extorted from her brother and from her cousins, and with them she signed the letter which was shortly afterwards addressed in their name to the Pope. Not long after the flight of Henry of Navarre from Paris, he sent an envoy to the court to demand his sister, whom he met at Parthenay ; Catherine declared herself a Huguenot as soon as she was outside the walls of the capital, but she joined her brother in making a solemn profession of the reformed faith at La Rochelle in June, and then

gladly returned to her old home. Henry appointed her Regent of Béarn, and she took an active part in the administration of the principality for the next fifteen years.

It is the custom among polite writers of that age to treat all persons of quality with generous impartiality as regards their personal appearance; princes are usually handsome and princesses invariably lovely. But in spite of many contemporary assurances, it is improbable that Catherine was really a beautiful woman. She was small and slight, with features strongly marked, like those of her brother, and she had his bright, quick glance and his expressive smile; but the trials which had passed so lightly over his head had left upon her an enduring mark, and there was always a touch of melancholy in her air which betrayed too early an acquaintance with sorrow. Neither of Jeanne d'Albret's children resembled her closely in character; there was in Catherine less of her mother's unflinching, intolerant spirit than of the kind and gracious temper of her grandmother, Margaret of Angoulême, and she reigned with graceful dexterity over the discordant elements which composed her brother's court. The serious Puritan, Duplessis, dedicated to her his *Meditations on the Gospels*; the soldier-poet, d'Aubigné, wrote songs which she set to music and sang to her lute,—“binding those spring-tide blossoms with silk and gold,” says the grateful author. It was she who gave Sully, a raw, ill-bred boy, in whom no one could have detected the great statesman of the future, his first lessons in courtly manners,

"taking the trouble to show me herself the steps of a ballet in which she wished me to take part, and I danced in it a week later before the King."<sup>1</sup> She won Turenne<sup>2</sup> by her frank friendliness, greatly to her brother's satisfaction, for the restless young viscount was a valuable but very uncertain ally; and her cousin Condé, in spite of his incessant quarrels with Henry, always remained warmly attached to her.

There was, however, another lady who had a better right than Catherine to reign at Henry's side; he had left his wife behind him in Paris, without a word of farewell, but when the Peace of Bergerac was signed (1577) there was no longer any excuse for prolonging their separation. Henry was not anxious for a reunion;<sup>3</sup> from his boyhood he had been fatally susceptible to the fascinations of women, but to the most fascinating woman in France he had always been coldly indifferent; and Margaret's reputation, at four-and-twenty, was such as might well make him hesitate to receive her. Margaret, on her part, had never pretended any affection for the husband who had been thrust upon her against her will: "Let no one say that marriages are made in heaven," she says; "the gods are not so unjust."<sup>4</sup> Her position at court was, however, extremely unpleasant; her brother Henry detested her; her mother was unable

<sup>1</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.* vol. i. p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> Henri de la Tour, Viscomte de Turenne, afterwards, by his marriage with Charlotte de la Marck, Duke of Bouillon. "The King her brother judged that there was no better means of keeping me on his side than the discreet and honourable intercourse with his sister."—Bouillon, *Mém.* ed. Petitot, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> Bouillon, *Mém.* pp. 167, 168.

<sup>4</sup> Marguerite, *Mém. et Lett.* ed. Guessard, to Chanvallon, undated.

or unwilling to protect her from the affronts of the King's favourites ; when her younger brother, Francis of Anjou, fled from Paris in January, 1578, she was suspected of having assisted him to escape, and the King's fury was only restrained by Catherine's urgent representations. The Queen-mother required an excuse for a journey of investigation into the condition of affairs in the south ; and though Margaret's wifely eagerness to be with her husband was hardly what she would have had the readers of her Memoirs to believe, she was probably less sorry to go into exile than was commonly reported.<sup>1</sup> Henry consented to her return,—he had not much choice,—and in the autumn of 1578, with her evil name and her tarnished beauty, accompanied by her mother, she arrived in Guienne.

She brought with her into the cool, green allées and scented air of the south something of the foul atmosphere of the Louvre, declaring with bold cynicism that secrecy was the mark of vice, and that to sin openly was hardly sinful, and she was soon able to say that "our court of Nérac was so pleasant that we did not envy that of France." She had no fault to find with the Huguenot gentlemen who surrounded her, except on the score of religion, and on this point a discreet silence was preserved, "the King, my husband and the Princess, his sister, going their way to sermon and I and my train to mass, and as I came out we met and walked together . . . and the rest of the day passed in all kinds of polite amusements,

<sup>1</sup> "A son grand regret, selon la bruit commune."—L'Estoile, 2nd Aug. 1578.

with dancing generally in the afternoon and evening." But before long the pleasures of provincial life began to pall upon Margaret. She complains to one of her correspondents that there is really nothing to write about, "no new thing, but always the same ideas and the same actions." She apologises for the dulness of her letters, "but Gascony is so tiresome that it can only produce tiresome things,"<sup>1</sup> and in March, 1582, she returned to the capital.

Through these dangerous years Catherine of Navarre passed unhurt, bearing a name undimmed by the least breath of slander, revered by the most malicious tongues. From time to time there was a talk of her marriage, and suitors were not wanting; and as years passed and it seemed more and more unlikely that her brother would have children, she became a person of greater importance. So long as he remained a Huguenot, there was no means of annulling his marriage, and if he should die childless, his sister would be his heir. Henry soon perceived that the position, disappointing enough in itself, might be turned to good account, and he was in no hurry to part with his advantage, Catherine, who worshipped her brother, was quite content to wait his time, and one after another the great foreign suitors who had sought her hand were civilly dismissed. The most splendid of them was the King of Spain. In 1583, Philip, a widower for the third time, sent two envoys to Béarn to propose a double alliance; he offered the Huguenot five

<sup>1</sup> Marguerite, *Mém. et Lett.* p. 163.



hundred thousand crowns, and a pension besides, to make war in France ; and further, if he would change his creed, Philip would get his marriage with Margaret annulled and give him the Infanta Clara Eugenia ; Philip would then marry Catherine. Henry replied that he could not accept either of the offers ; he was not the equal in power of the King of Spain, but in a matter of honour and conscience he could defer to no one ; he would, however, be much obliged if His Most Catholic Majesty would lend him the five hundred thousand crowns on good security.<sup>1</sup>

The religious difference proved an insuperable obstacle also in the next case.<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Savoy desired to marry the Princess of Navarre, but her brother's agent was instructed to remind the Duke that "the duty men owe to God takes precedence of all other considerations," and that no good could be expected from a marriage founded upon an insincere profession of faith. To the Duke of Lorraine Catherine herself objected on account of his age.<sup>3</sup> He then instantly offered as a substitute his eldest son, the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, who was four years younger than the lady. But a Lorraine marriage would have displeased the Huguenot party too seriously, and father and son were both rejected. Duplessis was most anxious to place his princess on the Scottish throne, which James VI. proposed to share with her.<sup>4</sup> There was no religious difference,

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém. et Lettres*, vol. i. p. 140, ed. 1824.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. pp. 152-270.

<sup>3</sup> Though, born in 1543, he was only sixteen years older than she was.

<sup>4</sup> Duplessis, *Mém.* vol. ii. pp. 216-218, 278, 279.



the political interests both of James and Henry would be forwarded by it, and Catherine would be a link between the French Reformed and the Protestant powers of England and Scotland, and "a strong barrier against the practices of Spain." The negotiations continued for six years, but Catherine was averse to crossing the sea and afraid of the northern climate. "Our princess," says Duplessis, "does not like the thought of drawing nearer to the pole."

Within his party, Henry found the hope of his sister's hand a still more useful addition to his resources. Condé was lured into good humour by vague promises of the coveted alliance, Turenne was allowed to aspire to it for a time unchecked, Henry even offered a certain amount of encouragement to still more impossible people,—“mere gentlemen,” says Catherine disdainfully, such as the Duke of Epéron. One night, when Henry was supposed to be asleep, d'Aubigné, one of the two equerries who slept in the room was talking in whispers to his companion. “What did you say?” asked the other drowsily. “Can't you hear?” answered a tranquil voice from the closely curtained bed. “He says I have offered my sister to half the princes of Europe and don't mean any of them to have her.”

The suitors, French and foreign, came and went ; at eight-and-twenty Catherine was still unmarried. It was then that she thwarted her brother for the first time by falling in love with her cousin, Charles, Count of Soissons.

Louis of Bourbon, the Prince of Condé, who was

killed at Jarnac (1569), left three sons by his first wife, Eleonore de Roye,—Henry, Prince of Condé, who had been Navarre's fellow-prisoner in Paris; Francis, Prince of Conti; and Charles, Cardinal of Vendôme and (on his uncle's death) Cardinal of Bourbon; and one by his second wife, Françoise d'Orléans,—Charles, Count of Soissons. His eldest son was the only one who adopted his father's religion. The other three remained at court until the Treaty of Nemours—by which Henry III. capitulated to the League—revealed how little the most orthodox Bourbon had to expect from the king. Alarmed by the discovery that Guise was aiming his blow at the head of the house of Bourbon as much as at the leader of the Reformed, they resolved to make common cause, Catholics though they were, with their Huguenot cousin. Henry welcomed them joyfully, and at the battle of Coutras Soissons was in command of the right wing of the main body. When the battle was over he took the count with him to Pau and presented him to Catherine.

The disparity in their ages—he was only twenty-one—did not prevent the cousins from falling in love with each other. It seems at least that on Soissons' side the sentiment was sincere, while Catherine saw in him a man who had turned his back upon all the advantages of the court for the sake of the brother she idolised, and was quite ready to grant him the reward which Henry had promised.

They had not long been betrothed before Henry regretted that he had allowed the matter to go so far,

for Soissons, who had, in fact, little to recommend him except his good looks, was less intent on assisting Navarre than on securing Catherine. He pressed for an immediate marriage ; Henry refused to be hurried ; they quarrelled incessantly and Soissons threatened to leave the party. The sudden death of the count's elder brother Condé, early in 1588, afforded Henry an excellent excuse for delay ; and the day of the Barri-cades (12th May, 1588) found the wedding preparations not yet begun. The news of the King's flight from Paris brought Soissons' irritation to a climax ; with Guise in open revolt, the opportunity of the Catholic princes of the blood had surely come, and he could not sufficiently regret that he had not been on the spot to take advantage of it. Want of forbearance was never among Henry's faults, but he had borne a good deal from his cousin, and his patience came to an end with the imperative necessity for it ; they parted in hot anger, and Soissons went northward to see what he could make of the new situation. He did not, however, go alone.<sup>1</sup> Sully, charged by Henry to discover if the prince had any plan of importance in his head, offered himself as a travelling companion, under cover of going on a mission to the King, and executed his commission with his usual adroitness. He feigned to be discontented himself with the King's service and uncertain of remaining in it, and the young man was easily persuaded to believe him a safe confidant. All along the road Soissons poured out the tale of his wrongs. He had been lured into leaving the court,

<sup>1</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.* vol. 1. p. 40.

he declared, by the promise of Catherine's hand ; had it not been for that foolish step he might now be at the head of affairs ; he was ready to believe himself the victim of a plot deliberately arranged by Navarre, to ruin his credit with the King of France. He found Sully's sympathetic attention very soothing, and parted from him under the impression that he had made a valuable friend. The King, who was at Blois, received him with a timid welcome, but Guise took care that he should not interfere with his designs, and he obtained merely an unimportant military command in Brittany.

On the accession of Henry IV. Soissons, like his brother, the Cardinal, accorded him only a grudging and uncertain support. They never spent three months without a fresh quarrel, and the disloyal attitude of his nearest kinsmen was one of the most pressing anxieties which beset the King.

Catherine, meanwhile, was occupied with the government of Béarn. She lived generally at Pau, in that Château-Chéri about which the tenderest memories of her childhood clung. Her most intimate companion was her old playmate, Diane d'Audouins, the Comtesse de Guiche, the beautiful Corisande who for many years had held the first place in Henry's heart, and who had once looked to hold the first place in his kingdom. Her beauty had gone with her youth, and Henry had grown tired of her, ashamed even of his former passion, but Catherine was constant in her friendships, and Corisande, embittered by the downfall of her hopes, found a refuge at the side of the princess.

Catherine still considered herself the betrothed of the Count of Soissons, in spite of her brother's decision to withdraw from the engagement, and she communicated with him through Madame de Guiche. It was in this way that Soissons learned that Catherine had refused for his sake the last offer of the Scottish crown while he was a prisoner of the League in Brittany, and it was probably the countess who first proposed the daring expedient of a secret marriage.

Early in 1591 rumours had reached Henry that a plot was on foot to end his sister's engagement in a way which would have been extremely distasteful to him, and the gravity of his situation in the north did not prevent him from keeping a vigilant watch over Catherine's affairs. His position was so critical, owing less to the activity of the League than to the disloyal intrigues of the Third Party, in which his cousins were deeply engaged, that he could not afford to neglect the smallest precaution. The pretensions of the Catholic Bourbons were already a source of the greatest uneasiness, and they would be immensely strengthened by an alliance with Henry's sister and heiress; indeed, even the bare rumour of the marriage was injurious to that authority which he was fighting so strenuously to maintain. It was a furtive challenge on Soissons' part to his Huguenot cousin, and as such Henry treated it.<sup>1</sup> He sent La Varenne, his confidential agent, to Pau with warning letters to Catherine, to Corisande, and to Ravignan, the president

<sup>1</sup> "Jugeant bien que le bruit du mariage . . . ne se faisoit que pour montrer qu'on avoit peu d'estime pour lui."—*De Thou*, bk. 91, p. 552.



of the Council of Pau. The replies were not satisfactory, and in March he wrote again to Madame de Guiche. La Varenne had reported that "all her purpose evidently tended to blame the King" and to encourage his sister in opposing him. "I should not have thought it of you," he wrote, with the naïve surprise he often displayed when his discarded friends showed they resented his forgetfulness, "but I have only one word to say : I will never pardon those who make mischief between me and my sister."<sup>1</sup>

Later in the year Henry invited Catherine to move to La Rochelle, where he hoped to arrange a meeting with her, but she preferred to stay where she was. Early in the following spring, while Henry was besieging Rouen, the Count of Soissons left the camp to go and visit his mother, who was lying dangerously ill at Nogent ; and instead of returning from Nogent to the camp, he hurried southward to Pau. Rapid and secret as the journey was, Henry had been warned, and with the swiftness which constantly disconcerted his enemies he took measures to interrupt its purpose. The Prince rode fast, but as he entered Pau the royal courier was close behind him, with orders to the Baron de Pangeas to arrest Soissons, and a curt note to the president of the Council which produced the greatest consternation among the members of that respectable body. "M. de Ravignan—I have been displeased by the way in which my cousin the Count of Soissons has undertaken his journey. I have nothing to say to you about it, except that if anything happens contrary

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres Missives de Henri IV.* vol. iii. p. 362.



to my will, with your countenance or consent, you shall answer to me for it with your head. Henry.”<sup>1</sup>

The news of the count's arrival at the castle had thrown the town into a state of excitement, which was heightened by the King's mandate. It was reported first that Soissons had come intending to carry off the Regent by force, and then that he had bewitched her into giving her consent to anything he proposed. The people of the valley swarmed up the castle hill, clamouring that they were there to save their Princess from the sorcerer's arts, while the Council hastily put on their red robes of office and marched up to the castle with more dignity but with hardly less agitation. It was nearly midnight when they entered the Regent's presence, and with many apologies accused the Count of Soissons of a design to carry her off, and the princess of having consented, contrary to the King's will. Catherine replied haughtily that she would answer to the King and to no one else for her actions, upon which the president, in a trembling voice, informed her that as long as the prince remained in the neighbourhood he must request her not to leave her own apartments. The castle was surrounded with troops, and as Soissons was only accompanied by a dozen friends, it was useless to think of resistance. The prince handed Pangeas his sword, and Catherine, in a fever of indignation at her Council's proceedings, wrote to the King a passionate appeal for redress.<sup>2</sup> She reminded Henry that it was at his particular wish she had first encouraged her cousin; and that not

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres Missives.*

<sup>2</sup> *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres*, series iv. vol. iii.

very long since he had offered her the choice between the Count of Soissons and the Prince of Dombes. Soissons, she said, knowing that she was preparing for a journey to the court had come down to Béarn to act as her escort, "a proof of love for which I cannot blame him." Suddenly there arrived "a mutinous troop, who, after arming the town, had made themselves masters of the castle, and, forgetting what was due to me both as your sister and on account of my life past and present," had impudently accused her of wishing to elope with the count. "It seems to me, Sir, that no action of mine has furnished reason for this suspicion . . . and that people of this kind ought not to be permitted to blacken the reputation of one who all her life long has set the care of her good name above all else. . . . If I were the meanest maid in your kingdom you would not refuse to do me justice. You have always loved me, . . . for God's sake, my king, let it be seen now that you are my good king and brother. If this outrage goes unpunished, I shall know you have forsaken me, and I shall have no wish to go on living. . . . Make haste to help me, and forgive me if I have wearied you with this long discourse. . . . Love me always, my king, and I will change lots with no living creature. I kiss you a million times in my thoughts."

Henry responded affectionately and urged his sister to join him without delay. He had gained his point by preventing the private marriage which, in spite of Catherine's assurances, he believed to have been contemplated, and it was never his habit to exhibit

aimless ill-temper. But while he soothed his sister's wounded pride by begging her to come to him and by directing the towns along her route to receive her with such honour that her journey resembled a royal progress, he wrote to the President Ravignan a letter of the warmest commendation.

"Monsieur de Ravignan—I avow that what you did at Pau was one of the most signal services you could have rendered me, and I beg you so to continue, assuring you that I shall always be a good master to you, and that I shall never let an opportunity pass of showing my willingness to recognise your services."<sup>1</sup> The letter was secretly treasured in the archives of the Council as a formal justification of the action which had brought upon the members the keen and enduring displeasure of the Regent. She never forgave them. In vain Ravignan protested, in the name of the whole Council, that nothing but the King's imperative order could have induced them to affront the lady whom it was their one desire to please and serve; in vain the mediation of Catherine's old friend, the Duke of La Force,<sup>2</sup> was solicited. Catherine was more constant than Henry both in her love and in her hate, and three years after the episode the Council were still entreating her pardon.

In reply to her brother's pressing invitation, the princess bade a sorrowful farewell to her home and set out late in the year for Saumur, where Henry

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres Missives*.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques de la Caumont, Duke of La Force, Governor of Béarn, a life-long friend both of Henry and of Catherine.

had promised to meet her. It was a mournful parting, for her people loved her and were loath to let her go; they recalled the day, twenty years before, when Jeanne d'Albret had left them for that far-off northern city where she died. "We see you depart," the old peasants said sadly, "as we saw your mother depart; we shall never see you return." As she mused for the last time in her favourite room in Château-Chéri she wrote on the wall in vague response to the dim foreboding of her own heart, "*Quo me fata vocarent.*"

She travelled slowly and did not arrive at Saumur till the beginning of the new year, when Duplessis met her on the borders of Poitou and conducted her to Saumur, where he was governor. Neither Henry nor Catherine were anticipating their meeting with unmixed pleasure. Henry could not have been expected to accept without reserve his sister's account of the incident which had disquieted him so seriously; he did not, in fact, believe a word of it, and though he had said little of his feelings, he had been hurt by the contempt shown for his authority by one who had hitherto been so devoted to his interests. Catherine, on the other hand, was still bent on justice for what she called the wrong done her by the Council, and which her brother considered in a different light. When, therefore, she arrived at Saumur he was still at Chartres, and a few days later he sent for Duplessis to learn something of her frame of mind before seeing her. He was disappointed to find that Catherine had not confided very freely even in that

intimate friend; she had charged him to tell the King that she would obey him in all things, but that while she would marry no one against his wish, he must agree not to marry her to any one against her own. On the 28th of February, ten days after the memorable talk with Sully which was one of the milestones on his road to Rome, Henry came to Saumur, bringing with him the Duke of Montpensier.<sup>1</sup> His object was soon evident. He had definitely decided that Soissons should never marry his sister, and to marry her to some one else was the most effectual way of disposing of his pretensions. Montpensier was a Bourbon also, but less restless and troublesome than his cousin, and he was also Governor of Normandy, and it was most desirable that his influence in the province should be at the King's service. Henry's humane and peace-loving disposition always led him to get his way gently, if possible, and he now began by heaping upon his sister every mark of regard; Catherine responded cautiously, and Henry then pointed out to her that Montpensier's birth, character, and sentiments were all that could be desired, and that in marrying him she would please her brother and advance the pacification of the country: could she hesitate? Catherine did more than hesitate; she astonished both Henry and Duplessis by her repugnance to meet his wishes. She who had hitherto dedicated herself entirely to his cause now met his most urgent representations with what seemed to

<sup>1</sup> François de Bourbon; Catherine of Guise, Duchess of Montpensier, was his stepmother.



both her brother and her friend incomprehensible obstinacy. But at last the secret came out. Henry was insisting upon the marriage with Montpensier, and Catherine lost her temper; she declared vehemently that it was useless to press her, because she was not at her own disposal; she had given Soissons a written promise of marriage, which she could not revoke if she would, without his consent.

Henry was exceedingly angry, but he controlled himself, though with evident difficulty, and before long Catherine, reassured by his unexpected forbearance, began to hope again; she even imagined for a moment that she had succeeded in bending the most inflexible will that was ever sheathed in patience and good-temper. Soissons was desired to give up the document, and of course refused; and the King's conversion (July, 1593), coronation (February, 1594), and the siege of Paris fully occupied the next twelve months, to the exclusion of Catherine's marriage question.

Upon Henry's conversion it was taken for granted by most people that his sister would follow his example, as did many other Reformed. During the siege of Paris, a month after the ceremony at St. Denis, the princesses of the League availed themselves of a short truce to go out to Montmartre to pay Madame, —the title given to the King's sister,—a visit of ceremony, and when, three days later, Catherine's ladies returned the visit, Madame de Nemours inquired if they had not yet gone to mass. They replied that they had no wish to go, but were waiting



to see what Madame did. Catherine stood firm. "They may tell you," she wrote to Duplessis, "that I have been seen at mass, but I have gone there neither in thought nor in deed. I am waiting till you are Pope." But even while she remained resolute in her own religion, she took the most generous view of her brother's defection, and among the discordant criticisms which the act provoked,—the shrill fury of the League, the applause of the loyal Catholics, the denunciations of the extreme Huguenots, and the regretful acquiescence of the moderate,—the woman who loved Henry best of all, and felt perhaps a keener pang than any at the change, still maintained a tender confidence in him. "I am glad," she writes to Duplessis, "that you have so good an opinion of my constancy, in which I hope so to persevere that neither you nor those who make the same profession will be deceived in me. . . . I am sure that the change you speak of must sadden you; I cannot tell you how great a grief it is to me. But I hope that God, who has been so good to us hitherto, will not forsake us now, and not, in particular, him who for the good of his people has ventured to relax his conscience a little."<sup>1</sup>

The gates of Paris were opened to Henry in March, 1594, and on the 18th of April Catherine made her entry into the capital. There was no hostile demonstration; the Parisians contented themselves with peering into the coach windows and wondering idly which of the gentlemen were "Madame's

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém.* vol. vi. p. 77, July, 1594.

ministers." On the 23rd the Duchess of Nemours<sup>1</sup> and her daughter-in-law, the Duchess of Guise, arrived in Paris and went "to kiss Madame's hands," accepting with a graceful ease which delighted Henry the situation which they had so vehemently endeavoured to avert. The Lorraine ladies had a particular reason for being polite to Catherine; the fortunes of their family had been sadly damaged by the fall of the League, in spite of the liberality with which Henry had treated it, and they had now decided that their best hope of restoring its former prestige lay in a marriage with the King's sister.<sup>2</sup> For this honour they could offer two candidates,—the young Duke of Guise, and the Duke of Nemours, the son of Anne d'Este by her second marriage. "I see no other remedy for our ills," said Madame de Nemours, "no other means of averting the impending ruin of our house."<sup>3</sup>

Catherine was probably ignorant of these designs, but she imitated her brother in receiving the defeated foe with the greatest courtesy, and even scandalised her Huguenot friends by the pleasure she appeared to take in the society of those who had been the fiercest partisans of the League. Even Catherine of Guise, Madame de Montpensier, whose virulent hatred of Henry of Valois had carried her far beyond the bounds of decency, was welcome at the Louvre. The Princess of Orange, Coligny's daughter, refused to meet the Duchess, who had admittedly instigated the

<sup>1</sup> Anne d'Este, Duchess of Nemours by her second marriage, mother of Henry of Guise.

<sup>2</sup> Duplessis, vol. v. p. 527.

<sup>3</sup> L'Estoile, vol. vi. p. 237.

assassination of the late King, but Catherine was less fastidious or had not the same freedom of choice. It suited Henry better to have the clever, unscrupulous woman for a friend than for an enemy.

Although Catherine was so intimate with the Guises, she still showed not the least intention of altering her religious position. On the contrary, the audacity with which she availed herself of the liberty of worship which was her personal privilege, amazed the Parisians. At the services held by her chaplains in the Louvre three times a week, seven or eight hundred persons were sometimes present, while men who had seen the palace stairs splashed with Huguenot blood looked on in bewildered silence.<sup>1</sup> On one occasion the Cardinal de Gondi led a deputation of the city clergy to complain to the King that they found it very strange that Madame should be permitted to hold her services actually in the palace. Henry replied that he found it stranger still that they should speak to him like that in his own house of his own sister. But to balance the favour which in this respect he showed the Reformed, on the death of Révol, one of his secretaries of state, he gave the vacant office to Villeroy, who was extremely hostile to them.

Montpensier, meanwhile, encouraged by Henry, continued to pursue the princess, and though Catherine still cherished hopes of a happy ending to her melancholy romance, Soissons seemed bent on frustrating them by his own folly. At the coronation at

<sup>1</sup> "Ce que le peuple de Paris comme estonné regardait, sans toutefois s'émouvoir davantage."—*L'Estoile*, vol. vii. p. 11.

Chartres in February, 1594, Montpensier was present with a train of four or five hundred gentlemen, while Soissons in his disgrace could only muster a miserable following of ten or twelve ; but he ruffled it nevertheless with the best of them,<sup>1</sup> and interrupted the harmony of the day by nearly coming to blows with his rival. He thrust a quarrel upon the Baron de Pangeas, who had arrested him at Pau, in the King's presence and threw him downstairs ; the Baron, a stout, elderly man, objected to such treatment even from a prince of the blood, and the King resented it still more. Then Soissons, out of favour at court, began to solicit the goodwill of the lower classes, and Henry's mistrust of him deepened as he watched him. "My cousin resembles the late Duke of Guise," he observed one day—"he is popular";<sup>2</sup> and to those who knew the history of their own time the phrase was heavily fraught with apprehension. At last, one day in 1594, the King sent for Sully,<sup>3</sup> and told him that it was absolutely necessary to put a definite end to the prince's claims by recovering the document which gave him the right to consider Catherine still as his betrothed. Sully reminded Henry of the many important matters which were then engaging his attention, and begged him to leave his sister's affairs for a more convenient time, but the King replied that nothing was of more importance to him than the princess's engagement ; whatever it cost, the

<sup>1</sup> "To hear Soissons talk, they might have been equals."—Sully, *Econ. Roy.* vol. ii. p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> L'Estoile, *Journal*, Sept. 1594.

<sup>3</sup> *Econ. Roy.* vol. ii.

document must be obtained. Sully had never seen him so vehement. He objected strongly to undertake the commission, seeing, as he said, the difficulty in the way and the consequences which might follow, but he consented in the end, on condition that Henry promised in advance to approve of whatever methods he might find it necessary to adopt. He then arranged his scheme. First he told an intimate friend of the prince, in strictest confidence, that he knew a way in which the marriage might be brought about, but he had learned it from the King himself, and it was not to be disclosed to any one. His well-chosen confidant lost no time in passing on the information. When, two days later, Sully went to bid Catherine farewell before returning to Rouen, she met him with an eager kindness, which showed him the plan was working well, and before long Madame de Guiche observed, "Here, Madame, is one who can help you if he would ; you ought to request his good offices."

"M. de Rosny knows very well," the princess answered, "that the Count and I have always had a particular regard for him, and if he were willing to help us in regaining the good grace of the King my brother . . . we should both bear it well in remembrance."

"Madame," said Sully, "did I know that you could both be absolutely silent, and that you were both resolved to be guided by my advice, I might indeed tell you a secret which you could never learn from any other. But the danger which would ensue were any one to

discover what I might say, keeps my mouth shut." The necessary assurances, of course, followed, and the envoy at last relaxed so far as to promise to take three days to consider the position. If during that time no whisper of what had passed between them got abroad, he would feel a certain amount of confidence as to the future, and he promised at the same time to find a pretext for deferring his departure to Rouen. It was not difficult to postpone a journey which had never been contemplated, and at the end of the three days Sully presented himself again; Catherine received him with expressions of esteem and trust, and thus encouraged he proceeded to reveal the only expedient by which she might obtain her heart's desire. He had, he said, lately spoken with the King on the subject of the marriage, and had expressed his surprise at finding him so averse to a match which appeared to Sully the most suitable in the world. The King had replied that at one time, seeing himself without hope of having children, and considering his sister as his sole heiress, he had naturally desired to see her wedded to one of his own family, good-tempered and pleasant, who would love him as a father and in whom he could confide as a son. The count, however, had no sooner seen Madame than he appeared anxious to obtain her by his own merits and not by the beneficence of the King; he was willing enough to espouse the King's sister, but not the King's party and interest. After enumerating the long list of offences committed by the count during the last seven years, Henry had declared himself willing to forgive them all



if he could only be certain first that they were repented of and would not be repeated. He gave his word that if he could have plain proof of the affection and sincerity of the lovers he would oppose their union no longer. If they of their own will, without compulsion or persuasion, would place themselves in his hands, renouncing all promises that had been hitherto exchanged, he assured Sully that before three months had passed, on a day when nothing was further from their thoughts, he would take their hands and pray them in wedding each other to wed themselves to his interests and to those of the State. "And you may certainly believe, Madame," said the envoy, "that if you and the count would choose this path, the result would be the happiest you could possibly desire."

Sully's proposal was long debated by Catherine, her lover, and the Comtesse de Guiche, in whose hands the written promises had been deposited. There was evidently room for anxiety in delivering themselves into the enemy's power; on the other hand Sully, with his clear, blue eyes, his air of brusque honesty, the rough exterior which was believed to conceal so good a heart,—above all, his long and earnest profession of friendship for the forlorn little lady who had so few friends,—was a mediator whose interposition seemed miraculously provided. In the end the confidence-trick was successful. The marriage-contract was brought from Béarn, and a declaration was formally drawn up and signed in the presence of witnesses by which "we, Catherine, only sister of the King, and we, Charles de Bourbon, Comte de Soissons, of our

own free will," declared all the promises of marriage that had been or might have been exchanged null and void. Sully swore that the papers should never pass from his hands, and he kept his oath, in spite of Henry's reiterated demands for the documents. Years afterwards, when his memoirs were being written, they were still carefully preserved among his private manuscripts.

The next year, 1595, opened sadly both for Henry and Catherine. Chastel's attempt to assassinate the King just before Christmas had created a painful sense of insecurity from which Henry, although he made light of it, was not wholly exempt. "Since I have been in Paris," he said, "I hear of nothing but attempts upon my life." On the 5th of January there was a procession to Notre-Dame, and one of the spectators noted that "the King was melancholy, though he jested as usual."<sup>1</sup> The misery to which the long civil wars had reduced the country weighed heavily upon him, and so did his personal necessities; Sully had not yet undertaken the direction of the finances, and he was plundered on all sides by his rapacious courtiers, while he had difficulty in raising the money for his own expenses. "I have hardly a horse to ride or a whole suit of armour to put on," he assures Sully,<sup>2</sup> "my shirts are in rags, my doublet out at the elbows, and for the last two days I have been getting a dinner from one and a supper from another, because my steward tells me he has nothing to put on my own table." Allowing something for

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.* vol. ii. p. 416, 15th April, 1596.

the picturesque vigour of Henry's language, it still represents an exceedingly uncomfortable condition, and the trial of poverty was shared to the utmost by his sister. In June, 1596, she writes<sup>1</sup> of the "extreme necessity" to which she was reduced, and at one time she was on the point of breaking up her household for want of a sufficient income to maintain it. The change from the soft, warm south to the inclement atmosphere of Paris told upon her health; she went everywhere with Henry,—“the companion of all my adventures, good or bad,” as he said, when she had made her last journey alone; and the rough life of his camp was ill-suited to her delicate physique. At the siege of Dreux she was nearly killed in the trenches by a cannon ball, and when she was taken ill in a village of Picardy she lay on a pallet bed, in a room “open to all the winds,” where the moth-eaten beams of the ceiling threatened to fall upon her.<sup>2</sup> But the conduct of the man whom she still hoped to marry caused her more poignant regret than either her poverty or her health. Soissons had not profited in the least by Sully's admonitions; on the contrary, he grew more and more indifferent not only to his own interests but to his own reputation, and in the spring of 1595 he committed an unpardonable fault. France had declared war on Spain at the beginning of the year, and in May Henry marched into Burgundy to reinforce Biron on the frontier. The French forces were inadequate and their situation very grave, but Soissons took offence at not being placed second in command,

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém. et Lett.* vol. viii. p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Sully, *Econ. Roy.*

next to the King, over Biron's head, and deserted his cousin on the eve of a battle. In the description of the skirmish of Fontaine-française which Henry wrote to Catherine, he refers maliciously to the prince's departure. "Many of my young nobles," he says, "showed the greatest courage . . . there were others who did less well, and some who did very ill indeed. Those who were not there ought to be sorry, for I was in need of all my good friends, and you were very nearly coming into your inheritance. . . . I am well, thank God, and I love you as myself."<sup>1</sup> To Soissons, who had written to complain vaguely of the wrongs done him, he sent from Dijon a sharp remonstrance. "You are determined, it seems, that you and I between us shall pay the fine for what some of your friends have dared to undertake in your name against your honour and my service. I told you so at Fontainebleau, and you might have seen it for yourself at Troyes if your affairs, or that indisposition of which there was no sign when I left you at Paris, had allowed you to be there the day you promised. . . . If, as you say in your letter, you have aided me in my misfortunes, I have always loved you more and treated you better than those who by artifice would keep you away from me and from the spot whither your reputation summons you, in order to contrive your hurt and mine. If, because you do not believe me, they succeed in the one, I hope so to provide for my concerns that they shall fail altogether in the other."<sup>2</sup> It seems that Catherine and her brother

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres missives*, vol. iv. p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. iv., 17th June, 1595.

were not at this time on a very friendly footing, for Biron, writing to his brother-in-law, the Duke de La Force, begs the duke to assure Madame of his attachment. "And I only wish that all the company here were as well affectioned towards her as I am. . . . She may be certain that nothing offensive to her shall be said or done in my presence."<sup>1</sup> In August Henry accused Duplessis of encouraging Madame in her opposition to his wishes in the matter of the Montpensier marriage, in which he was still much interested, and in September he wrote to La Force in a state of acute irritation. "I must tell you that I have lately received a letter from my sister which has greatly offended me, in which, after a number of very humble insults, she complains of me most cruelly, her words being gentle in appearance but in reality nothing of the kind, as you will see when I show you the letter ; among the many vexations hindering me now, I have felt none more keenly than that, when I desire nothing but her good, she should show so little sense of her obligations to me. Heaven, however," adds Henry piously, "will punish this ingratitude, and whatever she may say or do, I shall not cease to be her father, brother, and friend, and to do my duty, though, like a good many other people just now, she does not do hers. . . . Things are not going well ; I do what I can, not what I will ; you will find me grown quite thin, not from ill-health, for I was never better, but from worry."<sup>2</sup>

Catherine, on her part, was fully as unhappy as

<sup>1</sup> La Force, *Mém.* vol. i. p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres Missives*, vol. iv. p. 401.

her brother. In a letter<sup>1</sup> to the same correspondent she writes : " You cannot say that I am lazy, for this is the third letter I have written you in a week. I am still here [at Compiègne], and I do not know when I shall leave or where I shall go. May God grant me patience, for I have more need for it than ever, seeing how I am treated ; if I could tell you about it, you would be sorry for me. Would to God I were where you are [at Pau] ; I might at least find a remedy there for my bodily sufferings. . . . Whatever happens to me I shall always be your very affectionate friend. Good night ! remember me to my study and to my allée."

In the spring of 1595 Henry made another determined attempt to place his sister finally out of Soissons' reach. He despatched Sully into Normandy to offer her hand once more, this time very formally, to Montpensier, who had withdrawn discouraged from his suit, and Montpensier, flattered by the King's wish to have him for his brother-in-law, expressed himself willing to approach the lady once more, although he told Sully he was afraid her affections were already engaged ; and then Henry ordered Sully to obtain Catherine's consent. He summoned him<sup>2</sup> to his bedside one evening and communicated his wish ; he was to go to Fontainebleau, and inquire on the King's behalf after the health of the princess, and to assure her it was Henry's earnest desire to see her happy and contented. When it was plain that she

<sup>1</sup> La Force, *Mém.* vol. i. p. 267. Undated, but written probably early in the next year.

<sup>2</sup> *Econ. Roy.* vol. ii. p. 424, *et seq.*



was in a good humour, he was to go on to inform her that the King was convinced that for her to marry Soissons would be to abandon all hope of happiness, partly because the prince was so poor they would never be able to make both ends meet, and partly because of the extravagant ideas and suspicious disposition which made it difficult for any one, and impossible for Henry, to get on with him. If the envoy then judged that he could safely proceed farther, he was to propose Montpensier as a substitute for Soissons ; commending him to her on account of his wealth and his amiable temper ("he is a man," Henry had previously observed to Sully, "so easily led and so easily duped that he can never be trusted to distinguish between right and wrong"). But he warned Sully to be very circumspect, and if possible to avoid rousing his sister's temper, "which, you know," said he, "is very swift and passionate."

When the King ended, Sully scratched his head and said nothing ; but at last, pressed for an answer, he replied that he did not really see his way to undertake so delicate an errand, considering the part he had played in the same affair two years before. Henry, however, would accept no excuse, and after arguing the matter for three days, the master-will prevailed, and Sully reluctantly set out. He had first taken the precaution, to Henry's great annoyance, of obtaining written instructions from the King, that he might be secure from the chance of subsequent disavowal ; Henry maintained that Sully ought to rely upon his honour, and Sully expressed the greatest confidence in his sovereign, but declined to start until he had his

message in writing. Thus armed he arrived at Fontainebleau, where Catherine received him with her usual cordiality; she was longing to know what advance he had made in the execution of the promises made her at Chartres. For two days Sully contrived to avoid the awkward subject, but on the third he was forced to explain that the Count of Soissons' behaviour had so gravely displeased the King that the happy issue of their plans seemed farther off than ever, and he could not venture to plead the prince's cause any more. He had, however, new counsels to offer which would be more easily executed and would lead to a more fortunate conclusion than those he had offered at Chartres: was it the princess's pleasure to hear them? Catherine had changed colour more than once during this preface, but she bade him go on. She listened thoughtfully while he reviewed the whole situation, past and present, at great length, dwelling particularly upon the wrongdoing of Soissons and upon his own good offices, and when he had ended she answered gently that she perceived his style of eloquence was as fine as ever, and his phrases as elegant as usual. He had said, she added, many untrue things at which she might justly take offence, but she would rather inquire what was the excellent advice he boasted he could give her; he need not waste time telling her of her brother's views about her marriage, for she knew them already. "He will continue," she said, "to offer me to every one and to give me to no one. Does he suppose I have forgotten the many bridegrooms who have been proposed?

. . . The last of them was the Prince of Anhalt, who brought the German troops to Rouen, and him I might really have married, because then there would have been no need to pay the reiters. But let us cease talking of imaginary marriages, and tell me plainly what is the good advice which is to bring me so much felicity."

In spite of this encouragement Sully found it difficult to come to the point, and he discoursed vaguely for some time of the veneration due to royalty, and especially to so kind and clement a monarch as Henry; he even permitted himself to sketch a glowing picture of the two lovers penitently confessing their faults to the King, and "shedding their filial tears together upon his breast."

"And is that all you have to say, M. de Rosny?" said the princess. "I see indeed that you have studied your lesson very carefully. I will not give you my reply until to-morrow, that I may reflect upon it first." The next day Sully waited an hour in the ante-room before he was granted an audience, and he knew the result of his mission before he was admitted to Catherine's presence. "My words," said she, "shall be fewer and a little more sincere than yours. . . . I now see clearly that your only object all along has been to make my cousin and myself condemn ourselves out of our own mouths. The greater part of the errors of which we are accused are the fruit of your own cunning invention, and whatever you may say, the King my brother does not believe a quarter of them." She added that to interfere between brother and

sister was to put his finger between the bark and the tree, and she desired him in the future to avoid mixing himself up in her affairs. Sully replied mildly that the King was absolutely resolved to see her married, and he warned her that if she continued to resist she would be deprived of the royal liberality which had provided for her hitherto, and she would find it impossible to maintain her household on the same scale as at present.

“I think,” said Catherine hotly, “that you must really be out of your mind, since you seem to take pleasure in offending me. You speak of forcing a marriage upon me,—do you not know that this is a choice which should be free to all? As to the liberality of the King, that does not depend on your favour ; with the conduct of my household you have nothing whatever to do.” She added that in her opinion he could only have spoken as he had done without producing any credentials from the King under the direct inspiration of the Devil ; in any case she would have no more to do with him, and she hoped she might never see him again.

Upon this she retired to send a report of the incident to the King, and Sully returned to Paris, where he received a letter from Henry which had gone first to Fontainebleau, to be read by Catherine, and had then been sealed and forwarded to Sully. It contained a very stern rebuke. The King wrote that his sister had complained of the insolence of his envoy, who had said things to her which Henry himself would never have said. “You know very

well," said the writer, "my wish that you should address my sister with the same deference you show myself. . . . You are to reflect upon what you said and did; and if in the least thing you may have justly annoyed her, you are to return and ask her pardon, which I have provided shall be granted. But in any case you are to content her, for being to me what she is, I will not suffer any of my subjects to offend her without punishing him for it, should he refuse to show due contrition." Sully was overcome with dismay; the receipt of the letter made him actually ill for some hours; but later in the day a second letter saved him the expense of calling in a physician. "My friend," wrote Henry, "I have no doubt that this letter will find you still angry at the style of the preceding one which Boesse will have brought you . . . which I sent . . . only to be rid of my sister's entreaties and to appease the first outburst of her wrath. You know her as well as I do; we are both hasty and hot-tempered, but we soon get over it. Pay no attention to the first letter I wrote you. I know you have only carried out my own instructions, and I am quite sure you have not mislaid the other letter which I gave you as a guarantee. . . . Come and see me as soon as you can, that I may hear all particulars . . . and be certain that I shall receive you as well as ever, even if I have to go back to the old Bourbon device, *Qui qu'en grogne*. Farewell, my friend."

Sully's mission had failed, as he had foreseen it would, but nothing daunted himself, Henry was still



exhorting Montpensier not to lose courage, when in April, 1596, the appearance of the satire, "An Apology for Henry IV. to those who blame him for Rewarding his Enemies rather than his Friends," produced a sudden and most disastrous effect upon his relations with his sister. The Apology, which was written by the Duchess of Rohan, purported to be the response of "a faithful subject impelled to fly to his prince's aid" against his calumniators, against those who complained that the King had enriched his enemies and ruined his friends; and the subject was handled with a boldness which delighted the Huguenot party and infuriated Henry.<sup>1</sup> "You confess, at least," says the apologist, "that some people—the Leaguers, for instance—have been liberally paid; if you have not received the same treatment, it is because you did not go the same way. You begin by supposing that this prince has a vulgar, ordinary soul, you expect him to love his nearest and pay his servants, and to return good for good and ill for ill, like other people. Why, the most common men and women do that; his virtues are of a different, an almost supernatural order; they are rare indeed,—very rare. . . . You ought to suit yourselves to his humour. He loves, as you see, his enemies; join their number. He rewards those who offend him; offend him then. You ask why this one or that is rewarded and you learn it is because he made war on the King. There you have the secret, revealed by himself. . . ." The writer goes on to prove Henry's possession of all the virtues. "His Prudence? he is

<sup>1</sup> It is in L'Estoile, vol. iv. ed. of 1744.



always looking forward, he never asks what a man has done for him, but what he is going to do. His Temperance? see how he restrains the affection he feels for his nearest relations; there is not a sign of it. His Justice? there is no Huguenot in France who does not know it well. His Religion? it is well known that he did not find one enough. His Thrift? ”—and this was the sharpest sting,—“no prince in the world knows so well how to make a little go a long way, and here is the proof of it. He has but one sister, and through her he has made a dozen friends and will make a thousand more if so many docile princes exist. . . . Has he not offered her to five or six at the same time, I might almost say on the same day? ‘Come and join me,’ he says to one, ‘and I will give you my sister.’ To another, ‘Get your party to make peace with me, and I will give you my sister.’ To another, ‘Keep your province quiet, and I will give you my sister.’ And was he not always well provided with obstacles,—now the difference in religion, now in language, now in rank, so that there was no cause for quarrel? These are not the efforts of a soul who knows nothing beyond the old simple routine of giving his word and keeping it. Here is statecraft far more profound.”

There was enough truth in the satire to wound Henry very deeply, and in his anger he accused Catherine of not having warned him before it was published, and insisted that she must end the slanders against him with which her name was connected by marrying. He gave her a choice between Mont-

pensier and the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, the eldest son of the Duke of Lorraine, the same whom she had rejected nearly twenty years before. To this demand Catherine replied in a tone as haughty as Henry's. As to the satire, she said she had long since told the King all she knew about it, and it was for Madame de Rohan to answer for her own actions, unless indeed he, finding it impossible to discover any subject of offence in his sister's conduct, was bent on laying other people's errors to her charge. She goes on to "another and more pressing point," and reminds him that he had once promised not to urge her any more to marry Montpensier, since she could not love him; and as for the marquis, Henry must surely remember how lately she had objected to him on the ground that his father, the Duke of Lorraine, was a sovereign prince, who might constrain her in matters of conscience; in which case Henry would not dare to protect her, lest he were accused of still being a Hugue-not himself. He had then admitted the force of her argument, and had allowed her to believe she was to be left in peace. She now begs him to abandon all thoughts of her marriage, and to allot her one of his houses, "since I am so unfortunate, as at my age to have none of my own," where she might live apart from the court and vex him no more with the sight of her. "I fear you will find this letter wearisome, and for that I am sorry, for I have no wish to leave you on bad terms. Indeed, you may believe that death would be sweeter to me than this separation. But it is not consistent with your honour or mine

that I should continue here in the condition which appears to content you. Do me then the honour to let me know if you grant me leave to go, and a place in which I may live a cloistered life . . . and to my last hour I shall be guided by the respect and obedience,"—she had written affection and had ostentatiously put her pen through the word—"which I desire to show you eternally."<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn Montpensier, tired of waiting for a royal bride, married Mademoiselle de Joyeuse,<sup>2</sup> and after that the brother and sister seem to have drawn nearer to each other again. "This evening," says L'Estoile (1st March, 1597), "Madame was very ill and the King was with her till midnight. The next day his Majesty returned after dinner to see her." And on the 30th of August he wrote from Amiens,<sup>3</sup> "My dear sister, you shall have the first news of the happy success which God has granted me this day." He was still at Amiens when he wrote to Duplessis that he was on the point of marrying his sister to the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson.

For this step, inadvisable as it seemed,—for the marquis was some years younger than Catherine and a devout Roman Catholic,—Henry had serious political reasons. The Edict of Nantes was nearly ready for publication, and the advantages it extended to the Reformed, moderate though they were, had excited

<sup>1</sup> La Force, vol. i. p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> His daughter Marie married Gaston d'Orléans, Louis XIII.'s only brother, and their daughter was that celebrated personage, "la grande Mademoiselle."

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres Missives*, vol. iv. p. 838.

fierce indignation among their opponents. In Paris the preachers had begun again to stir up the people, as in the days of the League, and during the winter of 1598 "the air was full of the dull murmurs of a new Saint Bartholomew."<sup>1</sup> Henry dared no longer withhold the edict demanded by his Huguenot subjects, but he was anxious to do what lay in his power to calm the others. The Lorraine family had long been recognised as the champions of the Roman Church, and to give his sister to the heir to the duchy would, he hoped, be accepted as an indication of his orthodoxy, about which there was still a good deal of scepticism. The Duke of Lorraine, on his side, was lured into giving his consent by that will-o'-the-wisp which had already beckoned the younger members of his family into such miry places. The heir-apparent to the French throne was the little Prince of Condé, a child whose right to the title there was good reason to dispute; Henry of Lorraine, the Marquis of Pont, was the son of Claude of France, and the grandson of Henry II. and Catherine de' Medici; if Henry IV. died childless, as it seemed likely he would, to be the husband of Catherine would strengthen his doubtful claim to the crown which his grandmother had already destined for him. He had been brought up at the French Court and had taken a small part in the civil war, but his more active and popular cousins of Guise had easily kept him in the background; now that the ablest of the cadets of the house was gone, there was a chance for the elder branch.

<sup>1</sup> "On murmuroit sourdement d'une Saint Barthélemy."—L'Estoile.

Catherine's consent, however, was not easily gained, and the negotiations dragged tediously on. She yielded after long resistance so far as to admit her willingness to marry the marquis, but she declared that she would not alter her creed to suit that of her husband. By way of emphasising this protest, she did not discontinue her services while the Duke of Lorraine and his brother the Cardinal were staying in her house, and the Cardinal, passing the door of the room in which the Huguenots were worshipping, heard them singing, and, turning his head away, crossed himself thrice in silence.<sup>1</sup> When Henry pressed her to give way, she exasperated him by remarking that in their family constancy was not handed down according to the Salic law;<sup>2</sup> and when he suggested that her persistence might break off the marriage, she inquired, "Am I then to buy a husband as you bought a crown?" The Lorraine princes did not venture to proceed while she was in this resolute frame of mind, for they were afraid of the Pope, who had written to warn the Duke of Lorraine to go no farther; and the affair moved on in a slow and uncertain fashion. In January, 1598, Henry wrote that he had not been able to move his sister, and that he doubted now if anything would come of the plan, "for which, for many reasons, I shall be very sorry." In June he told La Force that Catherine was in very bad humour, "which is to me an insufferable infliction; that is why I am hastening as much as possible to get her married." In July the marquis

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile, 20th Sept. 1598.

<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigné, *Hist. Univ.*



had given up hope and went to Monceaux to bid the King farewell ;<sup>1</sup> in September La Force wrote to his wife that the marriage was certainly to take place, probably at Christmas.

Catherine, who did not wish to die unmarried, had in fact consented to do anything Henry pleased except change her religion, and he had assured the Lorraine princes that it was only a question of time ; if she were once married she could not fail to accommodate herself to circumstances. But the performance of the ceremony still presented an insuperable obstacle. The Huguenot ministers urged her to insist on being wedded according to the rites of her own church, and even had she been willing, no respectable ecclesiastic of the other could be found to perform the ceremony ; on the other hand, the marquis protested that if he could not be married by a priest he would not be married at all. Henry, maddened by the long resistance he had encountered, blamed Catherine fiercely for giving so much trouble ; and Catherine wept at her brother's harsh words but still stood firm. Notwithstanding her persistence, in December (1597) the court assembled at Monceaux to witness the signing of the marriage-contract ; Soissons had left Paris to avoid being present. Henry announced that he had no intention of forcing his sister's inclination either as regarded her marriage or her conversion—in both respects she was free to do as she pleased ; and Catherine answered that she consented gladly to the marriage, but that she could not lightly

<sup>1</sup> Groulard, *Voyages en cour*, p. 375.



abandon "the faith which she had received from her mother with her life." She added, however, that she was "willing to receive instruction" from any clergymen the King and the Duke of Lorraine might be pleased to appoint.

This looked like giving way ; it was the phrase which Henry had invariably used to signify the absence of any exclusive prejudice in favour of his own religion, but Catherine had used it, it appeared, in a more literal sense. She lay in bed, exhausted by mental conflict and distress, and the chosen theologians expounded to her the dogmas of the Roman Church and the dangers of heresy, but it was pure waste of time ; at the end of their labours she was obliged to inform the King that she could not say truly that she was converted. Henry was disappointed, but he had not gone so far only to be baffled in the end by a paltry scruple of conscience. Catherine was willing to marry the Lorrainer, Huguenot though she was ; the only real hindrance now was the refusal of the marquis to be married except by a priest. On the 3rd of January, 1599, the banns were read at the Huguenot service in Madame's apartments, and at the church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, and three weeks later the King sent for his half-brother, the Archbishop of Rouen,<sup>1</sup> to Saint Germain-en-Laye, and told him that he must perform the ceremony. The Archbishop objected that the necessary dispensation had not been obtained from Rome ; the betrothed were not only of different religions, but they were cousins within the

<sup>1</sup> An illegitimate son of Anthony of Bourbon.

prohibited degrees, and in uniting them he would be guilty of a double sin. The King, however, was obdurate, and the Archbishop was frightened at last into withdrawing his refusal. On the evening of Saturday, the 29th of January, Catherine and Henry of Lorraine, on whom his father now conferred the title of Duke of Bar, were told the marriage would take place the next morning. The bridegroom assented with a heavy heart, for his conscience troubled him; and the next morning early the King led his sister to his cabinet, where the Duke of Lorraine and his son were awaiting them. "Brother," said he to the Archbishop, "it is my will that you marry my sister on the spot to the Duke of Bar."

The Archbishop murmured something about the usual solemnities, but the King cut him short. "My presence," said he, "will make up for 'the usual solemnities,' and my cabinet, filled as it is at present with persons of quality, is a sufficiently sacred spot." He added that he would answer for the Archbishop in the event of any unpleasant consequences arising from his obedience. The priest offered no more resistance; but hastily putting on his robes, he united the duke, anxious and dejected, to the princess, who was visibly trembling from head to foot. The newly-married knelt side by side for some minutes in silent prayer; then rising they separated without exchanging a word, the bridegroom going with the Archbishop to mass, the bride, escorted by the Duke of Bouillon and the other Huguenots present, to the Reformed service. "I was at the wedding," says Duplessis to his wife;

"never was anything so cold."<sup>1</sup> Later in the day she appeared again, magnificently dressed, and a succession of grand entertainments followed; and on the 25th of February the Duke and Duchess of Bar left for Lorraine. She had told La Force that she was quite happy, but the Princess of Orange wrote that it was pitiful to see her parting with the King. "You never saw any one so sorry to leave France."<sup>2</sup>

She does not seem to have been unhappy at first. She wrote<sup>3</sup> that her father-in-law and her husband were both very kind to her,—“I am on good terms with every one, and I have the best husband in the world,”—and the country about Nancy was pretty, and reminded her of Béarn. “I live as happily as possible among these princes, who show me all honour; and in spite of my perseverance (in her religion) my husband promises to be good to me, and I have great faith in his word.”<sup>4</sup> But presently into the gay little letters which she was always writing to Henry there creeps the unmistakable note of home-sickness. “I should be afraid of wearying you by writing so often if I did not know you loved me; and unless you are often reminded of your little sister, absence may rob her of that honour. . . . I was glad to find from your letter that it was laziness and not forgetfulness that kept you from

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, vol. ix. p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> The Princess of Orange to Mme. de la Trémoille.—La Force, vol. i. p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres*, vol. iii. series iv. All these extracts are from this source, except where another is named.

<sup>4</sup> To Béza, 23rd July, 1599.—*Bull. de l'Hist. du Prot. France*, vol. ii, p. 142.

assuring me sooner that you still think kindly of me. . . . I wish you had been with us at Luneville, where we have been spending a few days. You get all sorts of hunting there. . . . My husband is hunting to-day ; he has heard of a very big stag, and he says that if it is as fine an animal as they say, he will send you the head . . . but if he is not more lucky than usual I don't think your present will ever reach you. If he really gets it, I wish I could be the bearer . . . I long to see you . . . forgive me if I say so too often. . . . There is a picture of you in my father-in-law's gallery here which I often go and look at, never without tears. My husband has the greatest affection for you . . . as for me I am wholly yours ; I shall never find it difficult to do anything you wish done. I give you a thousand kisses."

This state of comparative tranquillity did not last long. Henry, always sanguine himself, had led the Lorrainers to anticipate too confidently the result which they so fervently desired ; once removed from her old associations, from her old surroundings, they thought it impossible that Catherine should fail to acquiesce in the change of creed which her new position demanded. But they had miscalculated her fortitude. Weeks went by and Catherine was as far as ever from the papal fold ; her craving for the affection and sympathy of those among whom she lived made her eager to adapt herself to their wishes in every other point, but on the most vitally important she did not yield a hair's-breadth, and presently her perseverance called down the inevitable thunderbolt from Rome. The Duke of

Bar was informed that since the necessary dispensation had not been granted, his so-called marriage was invalid, and he was living in a state of mortal sin ; he must break off his connection with Catherine before he could be admitted again to the Sacraments of the Church.

The Duke, who was a sincerely religious man, was infinitely distressed when the consequences of his weakness were thus plainly set before him. He could not have expected the Pope to overlook so scandalous a defiance of his authority, but he had hoped that the conversion which must, it seemed, follow the marriage, would atone for it, and Catherine's persistence had placed him in a serious dilemma. He dared not obey the Pope and ease his own conscience by repudiating the sister of the King of France, a few weeks after their marriage ; on the other hand, the heir to the orthodox Catholic traditions of Lorraine could not know a moment's happiness while under the Church's ban. At Easter he was not permitted to communicate, and he then began to believe himself a lost soul.

Another event, which took place also at Easter, had a still more depressing effect upon his father. Margaret of Valois had repeatedly refused to join Henry in petitioning the Pope to annul their marriage, declaring that she would never permit Gabrielle d'Estrées to occupy her place. Her consent, which was followed by the mysteriously sudden death of Gabrielle, removed the chief obstacle to Henry's second marriage<sup>1</sup> and rendered the Duke of Bar's prospect of

<sup>1</sup> It took place in the following year (1600).

ascending the throne of France much more remote than before. It seemed unlikely now that the house of Lorraine would get any compensation for the sacrifices which the French marriage had entailed.

The Duke of Bar was of too gentle a nature to attempt to coerce his wife ; but the sight of his silent anguish wrung Catherine's heart. She used to wake at night to see him kneeling in prayer beside her, and knew too well the object of those mournful vigils ; they were more moving than his constant prayers and persuasions. He firmly believed her the instrument of his perdition, but she never heard a harsh or impatient word from him. "The gentleness with which he treats me," she wrote passionately to Duplessis, "makes me wish it were merely a question of laying down my life."<sup>1</sup> The strain injured her health, and she fell ill ; the people of Nancy believed her sufferings a manifest token of the wrath of Heaven. More fanatical than the Duke, they looked with abhorrence upon their heretic Duchess, and the building outside the town in which she worshipped with her Huguenot ladies long bore the evil name, Malgrange,<sup>2</sup> given it by the peasants. Alas ! how far the Fates had called Jeanne d'Albret's daughter from the home of her childhood—how weary was the road which lay between Château-Chéri and the Accursed Grange.

As time went on things grew worse. "I am pressed continually to change my religion," she wrote

<sup>1</sup> Duplessis, *Mém.*, Nov. 1599.

<sup>2</sup> Maison Maudite.—Calmet, *Hist. of Lorraine*.



to her brother, "and they are taking away all those about me who belong to it. I have no hope but in God and in you. My dear King, have pity on your little sister. I could have borne any other grief, because of the friendship I have for my husband, but this fills me with despair. . . . I am so ill that I cannot write, and I cannot get better till you find a remedy for my trouble."

To this appeal Henry seems to have answered unkindly, for she replies: "I am extremely sorry that you have misunderstood what I wrote to you, for I only meant to beg you very humbly not to allow me to be constrained in the matter of my religion, as I am pressed every day and every hour. If you only grant me this I shall be the most contented creature in the world, for in every respect I receive all the honour, affection, and good treatment I can possibly desire, both from my husband and from my brothers and sisters-in-law. If you would do me the honour to write to them expressly about it, it would be of the greatest use."

The next year, 1600, was a Jubilee year at Rome, and Bar resolved to try what could be done by a personal appeal to the Pope. He arrived at Rome in May.

The King had meanwhile desired Cardinal d'Ossat, his representative at the Vatican, to do his best to gain the dispensation. D'Ossat had steered the long intricate business of Henry's absolution to a successful conclusion, and Catherine's affairs were entrusted to able and experienced hands, but the dispensation was

even a more difficult subject for diplomacy than the absolution had been.<sup>1</sup> The diversity of religion did not in itself invalidate the marriage, for both parties were baptized Christians; it was on account of the relationship<sup>2</sup> between them that the dispensation was required. But had they both been Roman Catholics, there would have been little difficulty in obtaining it. The chief hindrance lay in the fact that one of them would not ask for it, did not believe either in the need for it or in the Pope's power to grant anything of the kind, and was perfectly indifferent (except on her husband's account) as to whether it was granted or not. Further, there were absolutely no extenuating circumstances. The Duke of Bar had been warned beforehand; he had sinned with his eyes open; he was persisting in sin even while he implored absolution. The Pope declared that under these circumstances he could not possibly grant the dispensation;—he would rather be cut in pieces. He consented, however, to see Bar, after he had been a fortnight in Rome, but the Duke did not find the audience very consoling. If he could not save his soul with Catherine, he was ready to leave her; if the Pope would lay on him a definite command he would repudiate his wife. The Pope spoke kindly to the unhappy young man, but took good care to do nothing of the sort. To give a definite command would have been to assume the responsibility of a

<sup>1</sup> All the negotiations are in d'Ossat's Letters, vols. iv. and v.

<sup>2</sup> They were distant cousins; "related between the third and fourth degree." Catherine's mother and Bar's grandmother were second cousins.

separation for which those concerned in it would have to answer to France. To send the sister of the King of France back to him, discarded and disgraced, was a step not to be contemplated without anxiety; Bar was afraid to take it himself, and His Holiness, as d'Ossat observed, was not disposed to pull Bar's chestnuts out of the fire for him. He therefore studiously refrained from pronouncing the order to separate, although he still maintained it impossible to grant the dispensation which alone could validate the marriage. In July Bar's confessor gave him absolution, and he was allowed to communicate in a side chapel,—“for an open sin requires open reparation before open communion,” and in August he went home to live apart from his wife, and talked of taking refuge from his troubles in a Franciscan convent. The persevering d'Ossat, however, continued to press his point; the next year it was referred to a congregation of nine cardinals and four theologians, but they decided that the Duchess's conversion must precede the dispensation. The Pope, said d'Ossat, was afraid of showing himself less firm than Catherine, “and after all, Madame has the affair in her own hands, and can set King, Pope, Lorrainers, and cardinals all at ease whenever she likes.” It does not seem reasonable, he adds in another place, that the Pope and all the cardinals should yield to a single Huguenot.

Catherine fell ill again from disappointment on her husband's return, and Henry sent one of his own physicians to attend her; he then proposed that as

soon as she was well enough to travel, the Duke and Duchess should come to Paris and talk the matter over with him. They arrived in Paris in July, and Madame held her usual services on Sunday in her own apartments, but the efforts to convert her were at once renewed. The seductive voice of Du Perron, Bishop of Evreux, which had guided Henry to Rome, was always in her ear; she was ill and lonely. "There is no one here to help me," she says, "no one to speak for me." She offered to go back to Béarn, where she "would be no trouble to any one," but this would have been only a temporary solution. And still she did not give way. From persuasion Henry passed to harshness. He warned her<sup>1</sup> roughly that the Duke had resolved to repudiate her if she did not turn; she replied that she had still his affection to trust to; she was sure he would not abandon her even at the last extremity. He swore she was mistaken, he would not be called the brother of a divorced woman, she should find no refuge in his kingdom; but Catherine had still a reply. "Even you may abandon me," she said, "but God will not; in Him is my hope." The clergy who were entrusted with the task of overcoming this tenacious resistance grew more eager, no argument was left untried, no pressure spared. At last one day she turned to Henry with the tears running down her face. "Brother," she cried, "they would have me believe that our mother is damned!" Henry was moved to sudden remorse; there were tears in his own eyes as

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile, vol. vii, p. 318, Oct. 1601.

he turned to his brother-in-law. "You can go on trying if you like," said he; "I give it up." She went back to Lorraine at the end of the year, and soon after her departure the Count of Soissons married Mademoiselle de Luce.

Catherine's position grew more intolerable as time went on; she was only sustained in her long martyrdom by the sympathy of such friends as Duplessis and D'Aubigné and by the prayers of the Reformed churches. "Our century," wrote D'Aubigné to her, "has seen many kinds of martyrdom, hideous and terrible; our people have died by the cord, the knife, the flame, the pincers, by living burials . . . and your long torment, your dying without death, your spiritual torture . . . have won you too a place in the white-robed army." At the end of 1602 she wrote to the Pope to beg him to grant the dispensation, for the relief of her husband's conscience, assuring him that she was still resolved "to follow whatever inspiration it might please Heaven to send her;" and on the 12th of December, 1603, a new congregation of cardinals decided to grant the dispensation on condition that Catherine should promise afresh to "receive instruction"; that her children, if there were any, should be brought up Roman Catholics; and that they should be remarried, or at least that they should "consent afresh" to their marriage. The concession came too late. For some months Catherine's health had been very precarious, and she died on the 13th of February, 1604, before the papal envoy arrived at Nancy. An outcast to the end in her husband's family, she was

buried not among the dead Lorrainers in their ancestral vaults, but at Vendôme, beside her mother.

Henry received the news of her death with much emotion. "I loved my sister dearly," he wrote to his ambassador in England; "no greater loss could have befallen me. She was the companion of all my adventures, good or bad, and she endured the ill more constantly than she had leisure to share the good." The nuncio presented his condolences with the rest of the court, but in somewhat undiplomatic fashion. "You weep the body, Sire," said he, "but I the soul." The King replied warmly that he did not believe his sister was lost, "and they both passed to other thoughts."<sup>1</sup> To mark his sense of loss, Henry stopped all the fêtes which had been prepared for the Carnival except one ballet "which could be easily adapted to the sadness of the occasion." A magician appeared on the stage who maintained that no man living was worthy to serve the ladies of the court; eight tombs were then brought in, "with full funeral equipage," and after "a dance of the same character" had been performed, the wizard summoned from the tombs sixteen famous princes of past times, who on emerging paid their compliments very elegantly to the ladies. Amid this decorous blending of mourning and diversion, Catherine of Navarre disappears from the historian's page,—a forlorn and lonely figure, in whose wistful eyes we read "*la poésie des destinées inachevées.*"

<sup>1</sup> Mathieu, *Histoire de France*, vol. ii, p. 629.









